The Dissertation Committee for Audrey Doussot certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

MEDIATED AUTHORITY:

PORTRAITS OF THE WRITER

IN THE AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION

FROM BAUDELAIRE TO BEIGBEDER

Committee:

Alexandra Wettlaufer, Supervisor

Hervé Picherit

Alisa Perren

Lynn Wilkinson

MEDIATED AUTHORITY:

PORTRAITS OF THE WRITER

IN THE AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION

FROM BAUDELAIRE TO BEIGBEDER

by

Audrey Doussot, MA; PhD

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2017

Mediated Authority:
Portraits of the Writer in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction from Baudelaire to Beigbeder

Audrey Doussot, PhD

The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

Supervisor: Alexandra Wettlaufer

With the advent of what Charles Baudelaire called "a civilization of the image", the interaction between literature and visual culture has intensified since the nineteenth century. Accordingly, the depiction of real literary figures in visual media like photography or the cinema has become more and more frequent, leading writers to take part, more or less voluntarily, in modern celebrity culture. Through the study of visual artefacts created around French writers between the 1850s and the present, this project seeks to examine the role of visual culture in the fashioning of writers' artistic and social identities. The writers considered, Charles Baudelaire, Colette, Romain Gary and, to a lesser extent, Frédéric Beigbeder, lived through times when the world of visual media was undergoing major changes due to the advent of new technologies, respectively, photography, cinema and television. As a way to reflect these changes and the successive phases of media history, paintings, photographs, films, but also extracts of TV shows will therefore be taken into account. They will testify to various discursive and non-discursive phenomena at work in the paratextual depiction of the cultural figure of the author, such as the staging of a public auctorial identity, the construction of a persona for marketing purposes, or the fictionalization of personal history, but they will demonstrate as well that literature may have entered a new stage in its history when words and writing are no longer the only essential feature of a literary career.

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations viii

Introduction: Genealogy of the writer 1

A text like any other? 1

The writer and his double: birth, death and resurrection of the author 4

Beyond the text, a visual image 16

Chapter 1. Portraying the writer in time of crisis: Baudelaire and photography 29

Identifying Baudelaire 29

A curious apparition 29

Making sense of an incongruity 33

Identity in the age of photography 36

The Baudelaire paradox 44

"Tout pour l'oeil" 44

Theorizing the cult of images 50

"Un homme accord de contraires" 59

Baudelaire on photography: an essay and a misconception 65

The end of a myth: "En photographie, Baudelaire s'y connaît" 75

"Le monde va finir": confronting a media crisis 81

Twenty years of photography – and still an indefinite status 81

Photography and the sister arts: disrupting signifying systems 87

"Arts de la main" vs. "arts de la technique": finding the photographer's imprint in the photograph 91

The writer, the portrait and the economy of the self 103

The reluctant model 108

The destabilizing of authority and the weakening of auctority 108

A prolongation of the Baudelaire paradox: collaborating by resisting or resisting by collaborating? 116

Split identity: Baudelaire's multifaceted personae 127

Chapter 2. Colette and the cinema, or the appropriation of visual media for the celebration of the self 136
Iconic Colette 136
Colette and the cinema: “un attachement chronique … divers et multiforme” 136
Colette in pictures or the fragmentation of public image 143
“The peculiar nature of literary celebrity” (Moran 9): Colette and the rise of modern celebrity culture 155
Colette at the movies: the author as spectator and critic 166
Chronicling the beginnings of a medium 166
Divine Colette: “J’aimerais aussi faire du cinéma” 187
Reclaiming authorship 187
Divine or “l’envers du music-hall” 193
Creating Colette: the autobiographical impulse 201
Colette, a filmic portrait 209
Biographical pictures 209
Locating auctority in *Colette* 219
Chapter 3. Media visibility, designation and masquerade: Romain Gary and television 226
Romain Gary and television: four emblematic moments 226
1956. Baptism of fire in *Lectures pour tous* 226
1969. The confined writer in *Actualité littéraire* 230
1973. The multifaceted writer in *Italiques* 235
1981. The writer in absentia in *Apostrophes* 245
Television and the author in the 1950s-1970s 253
Romain Gary and television: A simultaneous coming of age 253
“Saisir Romain” (Blanch 6): Portrait of a protean author in post-war France 265
The encumbrance of one’s own image 275
Establishing a new television genre 286
The literary talk show as a site of media convergence 286

What place for television in French literary culture?..... 295

"La télévision a inventé son langage, il est réducteur et stimulant" . 304

As a conclusion: And then what? Frédéric Beigbeder, convergence culture and "la surenchère médiatique" ("media insatiability")..... 320

References..... 331

List of Illustrations

fig.1. Pop Art Proust 4

fig.2. The Arnauldet portrait by Carjat 29

fig.3. Portrait with a bow (Carjat)

fig.4. Head and shoulder picture (Carjat)..... 39

fig.5. Baudelaire aux gravures 44

fig.6. “Nouveau procédé pour obtenir des poses gracieuses” by Daumier 62

fig. 7. Portrait with hidden hand (Nadar)

fig.8. Portrait in an armchair (Nadar) 76

fig.9. Bracquemond’s frontispiece for *Les Fleurs du mal* 78

fig.10. Portrait with cigar (Neyt)

fig.11. “Ridentem ferient ruinae” (Neyt) 95

fig.12. Portrait with crossed hands (Carjat) 96

fig.13. Baudelaire’s last portrait..... 97

fig.16. Out-of-focus portrait (Nadar) 120

fig. 17. Colette as Claudine..... 148

fig.18. Colette in *La Chair*

fig. 19. Walery’s publicity postcard..... 150

fig.20. Colette by Doisneau 152

fig. 21. Colette writing in 1922

fig.22. Colette writing in 1953 153

fig.23. Colette in her beauty parlor 162

fig.24. Colette’s look..... 185

fig.25. Discovering Roberte’s apartment 197

fig.26. Divine and Joseph the python 200
fig.27. Divine's resistance 206
fig.28. Colette as an exotic dancer (Reutlinger 1907) 208
fig.29. Colette's native house
fig.30. Colette in visual documents 213
fig.31. Written collaboration 221
fig.32. The paraphernalia of a woman of letters 223
fig.33. *Les Racines du ciel* 227
fig.34. Gary in *Lectures pour tous* in 1956 228
fig.35. *Adieu Gary Cooper* 233
fig.36. Gary in *Italiques* in 1973 236
fig.37. *Les Enchanteurs* 238
fig.38. *Les Têtes de Stéphanie* 243
fig.39. Paul Pawlovitch in *Apostrophes* 250
fig.40. The set of *Apostrophes* 251
fig.41. Filming Gary in *Lectures pour tous* 312
fig.41. Identifying author and text: Pawlovitch's book in *Apostrophes* 315
fig.42. A character morphing into an author 320
fig.43. Beigbeder and a fan in *Ouest France* 328

Introduction: Genealogy of the writer.

A TEXT LIKE ANY OTHER?

A friend of mine in grad school had an uncommon hobby: she would make small round pin badges with black-and-white effigies of French writers, like Honoré de Balzac or Agrippa d'Aubigné. One of them was thus a reproduction of one of Etienne Carjat's best-known photographs of the nineteenth-century poet Charles Baudelaire. Undoubtedly, making such badges and pinning them on a jacket is, for a student in French, to claim her allegiance to literature in a most iconic way. This tangible appropriation of the visual representations of writers is nevertheless more significant than it may seem at first when seen from a wider cultural and sociological point of view. These badges are also visible signs of a cultural phenomenon that Henry Jenkins, in the wake of Michel De Certeau, named "poaching" (*Textual Poachers* 24): it consists in the active appropriation by media fans of materials that they rework so as to produce other new materials. Although Jenkins focuses chiefly on how television fans manipulate texts "borrowed" from their favorite programs according to their interests in order to create new materials (like songs or stories), the practices that he describes are no different from this sartorial "*détournement*" ("redirection of purposes") of writers' images. There are, at their core, the same deep personal investment, the same exploitation of preexisting cultural materials for individual creation and the same inclination to expose to others one's cultural preferences and so engage with a community sharing the same preferences. Jenkins's analysis is interesting as the very concept of "textual poaching" that gives his book its title interrogates the

status of the writers' portraits on these home-made artifacts as much as the status of the writer himself. As visual forms of representation, visual portraits have historically been likened to texts, so much so that it has become a fairly conventional approach; but what about the writer as a specific intellectual representation? Can it be considered a text?

Michel Lacroix's essay in *Imaginaires de la vie littéraire* answers positively and even goes further as he sees in the figure of the writer a text like any other (7). If the writer is a text, then he/she is a sign or an accumulation of signs to be decoded so as to determine meaning(s) but also to be appropriated, circulated and put in relation with other texts. The writer, in this perspective, is an abstract entity, a perception or an idea that is submitted to dense, multifaceted processes emanating from all the actors involved in the production, consumption and commercialization of literature (readers, critics, publishers, journalists…). However, to summarize Ferdinand de Saussure, such a signified cannot exist without a signifier and without a medium to ensure its existence in the communication system. The photographic portrait of Baudelaire on the pin badge – or the visual figuration of the poet's physiognomy and individuality on the surface of the object – reflects this configuration while emphasizing an additional important aspect which is the materiality of the visual portrait as an embodiment of the text "writer". It conveys meaning and represents the writer known as Baudelaire but it is also an object whose characteristic materiality in relation to the visual text is comparable to the materiality of the book in relation to the written text. Furthermore, the transformation of a writer's portrait into a badge points in itself to the reification of artists', writers' and intellectuals' pictures in the modern age of mechanical reproduction and media proliferation.

A flyer advertising a conference about Marcel Proust in a French university (fig.1) provides a remarkable illustration of the banalization of the use of visual representations of writers. This multicolored document that anachronistically represents an early twentieth-century literary genius in a Pop Art style using a well-known 1900 photograph underscores how writers' pictures have become, not only widely circulated texts, but also commodities, mechanically and industrially reproduced, repeatedly modified and recycled. The seriality visible in the composition of the picture and the variations in color can be interpreted as a pictorial suggestion of the multiplicity of meanings that have been attached to the notion of writer. Behind this simple linguistic unit, there is indeed a plurality of referents. What we identify by using the word "writer" is an individual, an occupation, a social condition, an historical reality, a cultural role, etc. So, when we see Baudelaire on a pin badge or Proust on a conference program we see the visual materialization of this multilayered notion, which is also complicated by the fact that a picture necessarily inscribes what it represents in time and space, in physicality, and even corporeality when it shows human beings. One way therefore of addressing the significance of such visual artifacts is to wonder what we see of the notion "writer" when we see them – and this is precisely the question that prompted the following study, which aims to examine an act of representation consisting primarily in picturing a figure that is supposed to only exist and get authority through words. So far, I have intentionally limited the terminology used to the word "writer"; nevertheless, the analysis would be incomplete if it overlooked the fact, in French as in English, the concept of writer

(“*écrivain*”) is inseparable from that of author (“*auteur*”). When considering the writer, one inevitably has to take into account the author.

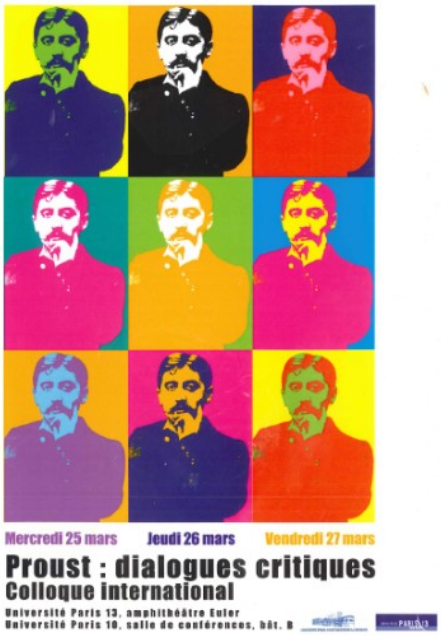

fig.1. Pop Art Proust

THE WRITER AND HIS DOUBLE: BIRTH, DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE AUTHOR

Today, the terms “*écrivain*” and “*auteur*” have become almost interchangeable in French. Originally and etymologically, they nonetheless refer to different realities that only partially intersect. A verbal root associated with an -er suffix denoting the performance of an action by an agent noun, “writer” in English literally refers to a person who does the action of writing (“*wrītan*” in Anglo-Saxon); similarly, in French, *écrivain*, which is derived from the Latin “*scriba*” or scribe, copyist, secretary, refers to a person whose occupation is simply to write. Both languages insist on the performance of a

specific concrete activity. The situation is somewhat different with "author" and "*auteur*". Both words have the same Latin root, "*auctor*" which was itself derived from the verb "*augere*", meaning "increase, develop, originate, establish". An "*auctor*", and consequently, an "author" or an "*auteur*" is an agent who is responsible for the increase, the founding or the invention of something. There is, in these words, the idea of cause or origin, which, by extension, came to suggest that, as this source could be moral, intellectual or even divine, there could be an allusion to influence or authority in the process of origination. In "author" and "*auteur*", the emphasis lies on responsibility: the writing author/*auteur* is at the origin of texts recognized as authoritative, contributing to the growth or development, so to speak, of a particular field[1].

If the words "*auteur*" and "*écrivain*" co-exist and similarly denote a person involved in writing, the nuances that have however been attached to them over the course of history show that the state of "being a person who writes" is not so easy to analyze. In literary studies, the necessity to make a difference between the general meaning of "*auteur*" as the agent at the origin of something and "*auteur*" as the person at the origin of a text encouraged critics to go to the roots of the term and coin the word "*auctorialité*" to refer to the specific definition of the author in literature as a socio-historical construction that transpires in a complex process of enunciation embedded in texts and in discourses both literary and social (Gallinari 3). In what follows, this terminology will be adopted so as to make clear distinctions, when necessary, between author/*auteur* as the

[1] Although I will not tackle the issue of auteurism in cinema in this work, it is undeniable that there is the same assumption in the use of auteur in film criticism to describe particularly creative film directors with recognizable styles.

general word meaning "the person at the origin of (a text or a book, whatever their nature)", authorship/*autorité* (if such a word can be used in French without too much ambiguity) as the state of being this writing person and, finally, *auctorialité*/ auctority as the specific ethos of the category of people (who could logically be called "*auctors*" for the sake of coherence) who write literary texts. Considered from this standpoint, it will be assumed that, from an etymological standpoint, all authors, or *auctors*, are writers but not all writers can boast of being characterized by auctority. When investigating where and how the writer and possibly the *auctor* are made perceptible in an individual's visual representation, one should however keep in mind that these are notions that are always socially and culturally marked and sometimes sources of controversies. What is more, they have not always existed but have, on the contrary, slowly emerged in our Western culture and evolved in time.

In ancient times, it was thus irrelevant to resort to such concepts: the individual who produced non-scholarly texts was a poet or a bard (*aède*) who was inspired by the gods. As such, he had no personal intention or creativity to express and was only a medium through whom the gods tried to convey truth and meaning to humanity. The medieval period saw the appearance of the words "*auteur*" and "author" but it took some time before they were associated with any notion of literary authority. In this period, the human being who engaged in the activity of writing was essentially a copyist or a transcriber as what we call now literature was then mainly a matter of gloss, commentary and collective writing indefinitely reworking the same quotes more than a matter of invention and originality (Compagnon, "Théorie" 16). Only slowly did the notions

auctor, a*uctoritas* and *intentio auctoris* emerge and give legitimacy and recognition to those who dared inject some individuality and personal intention in their writings. The still divinely inspired *auctor*, identified as the source of the *auctoritas* (the act of production or power of initiative), was to become, in Antoine Compagnon's words, "celui qui par son oeuvre détient l'autorité … [et qui a] un lien de responsabilité avec l'oeuvre ou avec le sens de l'oeuvre … l'écrivain qui est non seulement lu mais respecté et cru[2]" ("Théorie" 13). Later, in the Renaissance period, the poet became the most prominent literary figure – one who almost threatened traditional spiritual authorities and who could even provide some wise advice at court. The writer certainly gained authority in society but did not yet have the prestige and professional status that he acquired in more modern times.

In the same period, the development of the book as an object, printed, bound and ornamented, increased the visibility of authors. Their names appeared on the title-page and so could their portraits. In *La Fabrication de l'auteur*, Marie-Eve Riel argues that the invention of printing and the insertion of frontispieces in books, which departed from the past tradition of anonymity, gave authors a new dimension by activating a process of auctorial individualization. Interestingly, it operated on both the specific and the generic levels. With the passing of time, a stereotyped image of the writer (a scholar in a gown or seated at a writing desk) spread in visual culture and became "un symbole impersonnel de l'auteur en général" ("an impersonal symbol of the author in general"): the reason was

[2] "The one who has authority by means of his work … [and who is] responsible for the work or the meaning of the work … the writer who is not only read but also respected and believed." All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

the interchangeability of most visual representations from one edition to the other: "de copie en copie, le portrait de l'un finissait par illustrer le texte de l'autre, tandis que ses traits particuliers s'affadissaient ou s'estompaient[3]" (451). Simultaneously, this new editorial tendency inaugurated – when the images of writers were not diluted into generic clichés – cultural habits that were to last and even thrive later. "L'individualisation auctoriale et la recherche de renommée subséquente voient apparaître les reconnaissance et mémorisation visuelles nécessaires à ces médiatisation puis vedettisation prochaines de l'écrivain, aux siècles suivants[4]" (451). From then on, the notions of writer and author would consequently have a visual dimension that would increasingly impact their status.

The seventeenth century was a first major turning point in the emergence of the modern meanings of "*écrivain*" and "*auteur*". In his pioneering study *Naissance de l'écrivain. Sociologie de la littérature à l'âge classique*, Alain Viala demonstrated that the perpetuation of state patronage, the establishment of academies, the nascent reflection on intellectual property, the success of places of sociability (like literary s*alons*) and the multiplication of official signs of appreciation contributed to modifying the status of writers in the sense of greater legitimation and socio-professional recognition. Emancipating itself from religious authority, literature entered a phase of secularization and gained unprecedented autonomy (10), which went with a shift in the conception of the act of writing: a calling (s*acerdoce*) in the past, it truly became a profession (*métier*).

[3] "From one copy to the other, the portrait of one author eventually illustrated the text of another author, whose particular features became dulled or faded."

[4] "The auctorial individualization and the subsequent quest for fame have seen the appearance of the visual recognition and memorization that were necessary to the mediatization and stardom of the writer in the following centuries."

An unmistakable sign of the profound mutation that was taking place is the shift that affected the very linguistic designation of the people devoting themselves to literature.

At the beginning of the century, the word "*auteur*" was the most generally used, followed by "*gens* (or *hommes*) *de lettres*" ("men of letters") in which "*lettres*" refers to literature in the creative sense of the word, as characterized by an aesthetic aim. By the end of the century, such literary activity was almost exclusively seen as being the prerogative of the *écrivain*.

> A la suite d'une évolution continue au XVIIe siècle, l'écrivain, par opposition au savant, devint synonyme d'auteur de littérature au sens laudatif ou superlatif, observe Viala … L'écrivain désigne les créateurs de littérature d'art … L'écrivain a rejoint l'auteur dans l'ordre des titres de dignité, et le dépassera bientôt. Dans le dictionnaire de l'Académie, les deux termes sont équivalents. Mais, dans l'usage, *écrivain* a déjà dépassé *auteur* en prestige et il est réservé aux seuls auteurs qui joignent à la création l'art de la forme… Les conflits de l'âge classique sur le sens et la valeur des termes *littérature* et *écrivain* sont le meilleur signe de la consécration croissante du domaine littéraire dans son autonomie … La montée du terme *écrivain*, au détriment des autres appellations, suivant Viala, souligne l'hégémonie peu à peu conquise par la littérature dans le champ culturel[5]. (Compagnon, "Théorie" 29)

For Viala, the social and cultural changes of the seventeenth century brought about the historical birth of the modern *écrivain* in French culture and the first significant revamping of what Pierre Bourdieu named the "*champ littéraire*", that is, a fairly autonomous social microcosm continually under the influence of forces both applied and

[5] "Following a continuous evolution in the seventeenth century, writer, as opposed to scholar, became, as Viala notices, a synonym for an author of literature in the extolling or superlative sense … *Ecrivain* refers to the creators of artistic literature … *Ecrivain* joined *auteur* in the category of titles of dignity, and would soon outshine it. In the dictionary of the Academy, the two words are equivalent. However, in everyday use, *écrivain* was already more prestigious than *auteur* and is only reserved for authors who bring together creation and formal artistry … The struggles of the classical age over the meaning and value of terms such as literature and writer are the best indicator of the growing consecration of the autonomous literary field … The rise of the word *écrivain* to the detriment of other labels underlines, according to Viala, the hegemony that was gradually achieved by literature in the cultural field."

endured by the agents belonging to this space. The French language, compelled to take into account such cultural revolution, adapted to reflect the new state of things not by coining a new term but by validating a reversal in value: while "*auteur*" was relegated to the general designation of individuals who write texts, "*écrivain*" now distinguished those whose works have literary and aesthetic merits.

The next century first saw the confirmation of the trends that had appeared with the redefinition of literature in the classical age, with, however, two notable evolutions which are the prominence of the philosopher and the attention given to the notion of copyright as it is still conceptualized in France today. In addition to the key historical changes caused by the Enlightenment movement and the Revolution, the eighteenth century was meaningful because it saw the beginning of a crucial phase which was identified by Paul Bénichou as *Le Sacre de l'écrivain* ("the consecration of the writer"). For him, the era between 1750 and 1830 that saw the transition from the Enlightenment to Romanticism enabled, as stated by the subtitle of his book, "l'avènement d'un pouvoir spirituel laïque dans la France moderne" ("the advent of a lay spiritual power in modern France") which gave writers a prominent place in society. Glorified to the status of a prophet or a genius, the writer could now have a claim to unprecedented social prestige. But for a handful of high-status writers, the blessed age was however brief. The post-Revolutionary context, the decline of state patronage and the modernization of the literary trade strongly impacted the status of writers to the point of bringing many to the verge of social marginalization or destitution. Even though the 1791 copyright laws,

which fully recognized the rights of authors, improved their judicial status, they had to face another revolution that was altering their situation.

"Homme à la mode, objet d'un véritable culte, l'auteur paraît alors tout puissant" Alain Vaillant remarks "mais face à lui se constitue une autre force, industrielle celle-là, née de la liberté d'entreprendre et des promesses de nouveaux procédés d'imprimerie, avec laquelle il devra composer[6]" (Luneau & Vincent 62). What Vaillant alludes to here is the industrialization of book production along capitalist lines that notably gave much power to publishers to the detriment of authors. He also points to a more extensive change in the structure of the literary world which Bourdieu, in *Les Règles de l'art*, described as the construction of a specific "literary field" ("*champ littéraire*") within the vaster "cultural field" ("*champ culturel*") through a process which emancipated literature from state authority and traditional institutions. By getting full autonomy, literature became vulnerable to the pressures inherent to the play between supply and demand and the writer became only one actor among others (publisher, bookseller, etc.) in the fabrication and commercialization of books.

According to Bourdieu, the new configuration of the literary field required writers to position themselves within a dichotomy that now opposed a subfield of restricted production ("*sous-champ de production restreinte*") valorizing an avant-garde art for art's sake conception of literature and a subfield of extended production ("*sous-champ de grande production*") that matched the new mercantile orientation of literature. The

6 "A fashionable man, an object of worship, the author appears almighty… but he is faced with the emergence of another force; it is an industrial force born with the freedom of initiative and the promises of new printing processes with which he will have to deal."

cultural industry that was thus established also started to modify the way writers would manifest their presence in society. The acceleration in productivity meant that more attention was given to writers, all the more so as successive technological innovations allowed "l'ouverture de l'ère médiatique" ("the opening of the media era", Dozo, Glinoer & Lacroix 110). The popular success of illustrated press, photography, the cinematograph (and then, in the next century, television) has, from the nineteenth century on, pressured writers into exposing themselves more frequently to the public eye and into spending more time in environments not strictly related to literary sociability. While the writer was encouraged to leave his writing desk as well as his familiar *salons*, *cénacles*, and other coterie gatherings, the author was asked to withdraw from text and to step in the light so as to unveil the mystery of literary creation.

If it is still admitted, in the twentieth century, that the writer is this esteemed individual who writes texts of a literary nature and has a specific cultural and intellectual status in society, the author as the entity legally, morally and artistically responsible for the existence of a text is regarded more suspiciously. After consecrating the *écrivain* while somewhat neglecting the *auteur*, French culture, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, put the *auteur* on the spot, which caused a second major hermeneutic and literary reconsideration comparable to that of the seventeenth century. The issue is mostly to figure out the exact nature of the a*uteur* and the impact that such a problematic notion has on a text and its interpretation. For Jean-Yves Mollier, "c'est au plus fort de son triomphe ou de son avènement sur la scène publique que l'auteur a subi les premières

attaques le priant de s'effacer derrière la majesté du langage[7]" (Luneau & Vincent 20). The now famous feud opposing the nineteenth-century critic Sainte-Beuve and Marcel Proust was notably to initiate a questioning movement that lasted for the whole century. In *Contre Sainte Beuve*, Proust rejected the critic's "biographical approach" which consisted in assessing literary texts in relation with the life and personalities of their authors, as though a text was necessarily the expression of an individual's behavior. He instead believed that the worldly, social individual or *écrivain* who holds the pen and actually writes has nothing to do with his/her work and that the person that he/she is cannot be held responsible for how the content of the text can be understood. What Proust's position also suggests is that a text cannot be analyzed by only looking for a writer's personal deliberate intention ("what does he/she mean?") behind every sentence. There is, for him, an unconscious or involuntary dimension in the act of writing and therefore in what has been traditionally identified in literary studies as the author's intention.

After Proust, it is clear that the *auteur* of a text is not the *écrivain* of the text and that the text is not simply a paper equivalent of any of them. Perceived as being more closely related to the text than the writer, the author is more than ever under scrutiny and opposed to the text, and more precisely to language as the essential matter of the text. The critical period for the reexamination of the concept of *auteur* is thus the 1960s when both Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault pronounced the death of the *auteur* as it was

[7] "It is when the author was at the height of his triumph or his emergence on the public scene that he started to be under the first attacks commanding him to hide behind the grandeur of language."

traditionally defined. In the controversial 1968 "La mort de l'auteur", Barthes advocated the supremacy of the text and the irrelevance of the *auteur* if the a*uteur* is conceptualized as an almost sacred authority that determines, if not dictates, the meaning of the text. Like Proust, Barthes evidently protests against the use of a writer's biographical data or personal tastes to interpret his/her texts. The *auteur* is dead for him in the sense that such an entity cannot be held accountable for what we read in a text, only language and the meaning we generate from it is relevant. He deprives writers of the illusion that they have full control over their texts but endows readers with the power of producing their sense and coherence. What he claims is the death of an institution, the obsolescence of an old idea that assumes that the writer is perceptible (if only by the expression of some authority) in the text he/she produces and that overshadows the importance of language. With Barthes, the *auteur* is nothing but a "*scripteur*" ("scriptor"), a role taken by the *écrivain* when engaged in a process of creation in which language may say more than what he/she intends. On this particular point, Barthes actually stands not so far from Foucault's position.

In 1969, in "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?", Foucault indeed concludes that what is referred to as *auteur* is nothing but a function, and more precisely a classificatory function which has mainly legal and discursive implications but which also significantly varied according to historical contexts. A product of diverse discourses, the *auteur* is certainly not a real person but a designation through the use of a name and a construction emanating from the text when interpreted by readers. To paraphrase Henry James, the *auteur* is a figure in the text, an *alter ego* of the person who writes that forms through the

confrontation with the text: "l'auteur n'est pas le producteur et le garant du sens, mais le « principe d'économie dans la prolifération du sens ». Il limite l'appropriation du texte par le lecteur[8]," Compagnon explains, quoting the philosopher's own words ("Théorie" 8). The a*uteur* is a construction resulting from complex processes that are also exterior to texts and embedded in culture so that Foucault can say: "La fonction auteur est caractéristique du mode d'existence, de circulation et de fonctionnement de certains discours à l'intérieur d'une société[9]" (2: 83). "N'[appartenant] ni à l'état civil ni à la fiction de l'œuvre mais se [situant] à leur jointure et à leur rupture[10]" (Compagnon, "Théorie" 7), the *auteur* can be seen a projection since "le texte pointe vers cette figure qui lui est extérieure et antérieure[11]" (2: 77). Here, Foucault's remark echoes another by Barthes, who in *Le Plaisir du texte* conceded: "mais dans le texte, d'une certaine façon, je *désire* l'auteur : j'ai besoin de sa figure, comme il a besoin de la mienne[12]" (Compagnon, "Théorie" 54).

The impulse (*élan*) mentioned by Foucault and Barthes through the ideas of projection and desire may be what prompted the recent renewed attention in the notions of *écrivain* and especially *auteur*[13]. The *écrivain* and the a*uteur*, as complex

---

[8] "The author is not the producer or the guarantor of the meaning but the « principle of economy within the proliferation of meaning ». It restricts the appropriation of the text by the reader."

[9] "The *auteur* function is characteristic of the modes of existence, circulation and operation of certain discourses within a society."

[10] "As he neither has a civil status nor belongs to the fiction in the work but rather is at the intersection or the separation of the two."

[11] "The text points to this figure that is exterior and anterior to it."

[12] "And yet, in a way, I *desire* the author in the text: I need his/her figure as he/she needs mine."

[13] See, for instance: Federico Ferrari and Jean-Luc Nancy. *Iconographie de l'auteur* (2005), Marie-Pier Luneau and Josée Vincent, eds, *La Fabrication de l'auteur* (2010), Seth Whidden *Authority in Crisis in French Literature, 1850-1880* (2014).

constructions, roles, and fantasies cumulated in one entity, are still unstable figures that interrogate the process of literary creation and the status of the individual who performs it both in it and outside it. The a*uteur* in particular is being resurrected. In a growing context of "*biographisme sauvage*" ("uncontrolled biographic practices", Dozo, Glinoer & Lacroix 7) that contributes to the expansion of a "*galaxie biographoīde*" ("biographoid galaxy", Madélénat 95) placing the writing individual at the center of a myriad of different biographical works, the individual is summoned to come back to the forefront and find a satisfying place within the *écrivain*/*auteur* dichotomy. Trying to find traces of the *auteur* and *écrivain* in texts is no longer enough; they are now also tracked down outside the text, in the paratext, and more widely in works where the medium of expression is not verbal language but pictures for instance. Assuming therefore that words and writing are no longer the only essential feature of a literary career in which writers have been summoned to become visually embodied presences, the present study will aim at considering the notions of *écrivain*, *auteur*, and a*uctorialité* through the lens of visual culture.

BEYOND THE TEXT, A VISUAL IMAGE

As formulated by Compagnon, literature has the particularity of being communication *in absentia* ("Théorie" 1) since the author is not there to specify what he/she means. To counter this absence, readers supposedly seek to restore a subject or at

least some form of identifiable presence in what they read: "Le lecteur a besoin d'un interlocuteur imaginaire, construit par lui dans l'acte de lecture, sans lequel la lecture serait abstraction vaine[14]" ("Théorie" 6). For a long time, readers thus invented for themselves an image of the author that was pure invention, a fancy of the mind which they instinctively endowed with human physical features; but the invention of visual media providing accurate pictures of reality changed the rules of the game. According to Steven Bernas, such media enabled readers to restore the human person in the author by undermining the virtual nature of what was primarily a mental construction derived from textual effects (359). The old idea that not only the author but the man can be found in his work (*oeuvre*) was amplified by another that similarly assumed that an author's appearance certainly reflected his *oeuvre* and auctority. For Riel, it has become a potent preconception as she states in relation to photography:

> Invariant dans les règles de construction physique de l'auteur, la nécessité de représenter l'œuvre apparaît comme une tendance forte … Faire écho au texte dans une photographie, c'est non seulement établir un rapport de corrélation entre l'homme et l'œuvre mais plus encore attester de l'authenticité de l'écrivain qui, comme tout véritable créateur, ne ferait qu'un avec son art[15]. (Luneau & Vincent 453)

Federico Ferrari and Jean-Luc Nancy however underscore the illusory nature of such a belief while acknowledging the impulse in human readers who cannot help it: when it comes to literature, they have to get more than meets the eye.

---

[14] "The reader needs an imaginary interlocutor constructed by him in the act of reading, with this interlocutor reading would be vain abstraction."

[15] "One constant in the rules governing the physical construction of authors, the necessity to represent their works appears to be a strong trend … Mirroring the text in a photograph means not only establishing a correlation between the man and his works but also attesting to the authenticity of the writer who, like any genuine creator, is presumably at one with his art."

> Jamais personne ne pourra voir dans un portrait – peinture, dessin, photo … – la face d'un auteur. Mais personne ne pourra regarder le portrait du signataire d'une œuvre sans y scruter la présence de l'auteur … Et lorsqu'il n'y a pas de portrait du signataire, c'est à perte de vue, mais aussi en un autre sens que l'imagination s'épuise à chercher un schème, une silhouette[16]. (Ferrari & Nancy 13)

It is worthy of note that the two critics allude to a space exterior to the work itself, "as far as the eye can see," which both expands the work and gives an invaluable point of entry onto it because their vision echoes the concepts of "paratext" and "posture" that are to prove essential tools in my approach of visual documents as auctorial statements.

> Le portrait de l'auteur ne livre assurément aucune signification de l'œuvre ... Mais il peut constituer un signal ou un ensemble de signaux vers l'œuvre et au-delà d'elle : une expression de visage, un profil, un regard, une main, une façon de se tenir ou de s'habiller – et jusqu'au seul fait d'accepter ou non le portrait, de se laisser photographier, peindre ou filmer … tout cela donne autant d'avis, d'indices, de gestes esquissés qui s'ajoutent à l'œuvre sans s'y intégrer, qui passent à côté d'elle, qui la frôlent et contribuent à son allure. Le portrait ne serait rien sans l'œuvre (on ne le tirerait pas…). Mais avec l'œuvre, il devient pour elle comme un *parergon* ou un *hors d'œuvre* (un *exergue*) qui introduit l'œuvre ou qui nous guide à sa sortie, vers le prolongement hors d'elle de ses sens[17]. (33)

The "*hors d'oeuvre*" (or "*hors de l'œuvre*," "outside the work") mentioned by Ferrari and Nancy is reminiscent of this other marginal space of literature that was named "paratext". As the chief theorist of the paratext, Gérard Genette defined it as an "*accompagnement*"

---

[16] "Nobody will ever be able to see an author's face in a portrait – whether painting, drawing or photography. Nobody will however be able to behold the portrait of a work's signatory without scrutinizing the presence of the author … And when there is no portrait of the signatory, it is as far as the eye can and in other directions that the imagination wears itself out looking for a schema, a figure."

[17] "Assuredly, the portrait of an author does not reveal any meaning to be found in his work … But it can constitute a signal or a body of signals pointing to the work and beyond: a facial expression, a profile, a look, a hand, a way of positioning or dressing oneself – and even the very fact of agreeing to being portrayed or not, to being photographed, painted or filmed … all these are as many notices, clues, and slight gestures that add up to the work but are not included into it, that exist beside it, that come very close to it and contribute to its look. A portrait would be nothing without the author's work (there would be no reason to make it…). However, when in relation with the work, it becomes for the work a *parergon* or a *hors d'œuvre* (an *epigraph*) that introduces the work or guides us to its exit, towards the expansion of its meanings outside it."

("accompaniment"), a "*zone indécise*" ("open zone") at the periphery of the text occupied by a heterogeneous series of verbal and non-verbal productions related to the text itself or its author (8). These productions "entourent et prolongent [le texte], précisément pour le *présenter*, au sens habituel de ce verbe, mais aussi en son sens le plus fort : pour le *rendre présent*, pour assurer sa présence au monde, sa « réception » et sa consommation[18]" (7). Finally, and importantly, the paratext is for Genette a meeting space where the author, the reader and concrete practices implemented by editorial strategies converge.

> « Zone indécise » entre le dedans et le dehors, elle-même sans limite rigoureuse, ni vers l'intérieur (le texte), ni vers l'extérieur (le discours du monde sur le texte), lisière, ou comme disait Philippe Lejeune, « frange du texte imprimé qui, en réalité, commande toute la lecture ». Cette frange, en effet, toujours porteuse d'un commentaire auctorial, ou plus ou moins légitimé par l'auteur, constitue, entre texte et hors-texte, une zone non seulement de transition, mais de *transaction* : lieu privilégié d'une pragmatique et d'une stratégie, d'une action sur le public, au service … d'un meilleur accueil du texte et d'une lecture plus pertinente – plus pertinente, s'entend, aux yeux de l'auteur et de ses alliés[19]. (*Seuils* 8)

Genette also makes a distinction between the "peritext", which covers what is to be found inside a book except the text itself (preface, title, etc.), and the "epitext" which refers to what is "outside and around" the text (like advertising materials for instance). Since the object of this study has to do with photographic, cinematic and televisual representations of writers, that is, visual objects that were not meant to be inserted in the

[18] "Surround and extend [the text], precisely so as to *present* it, in the usual sense of the word, but also, in its strongest sense, to make it *present*, to ensure its presence in the world, its "reception" and its consumption."

[19] "« An open zone » between the inside and the outside, without any strict limit itself, neither towards the inside (the text), nor towards the outside (the world's discourse on the text), it is a border, or as Philippe Lejeune would say, « a fringe in the printed text that actually commands its reading ». This fringe always carries an auctorial comment, or a comment more or less legitimized by the author, is, between what is in the text and what is not, a transition zone but also a *transaction* zone: there lies, in this privileged site, a practical strategy, an action on the public to the service of … a better reception of the text and a more pertinent reading – that is, a more pertinent reading in the eyes of the author and his/her allies."

books authored by the writers whom I shall consider, the epitext, more than the peritext, will be of interest to me. I would like to extend the notion of epitext (and therefore to some extent that of paratext) to include these peripheral works, "more or less legitimized" by writers as Genette importantly specifies, which, although created by others, are in direct relation with them and their *oeuvre*. The study of such documents will raise the question of mediation which I construe as a dynamic process by which these "others" intervene in the representation they make of their subject. It will imply examining the construction of one particular writer's identity in a specific visual or audiovisual medium through the perception and work of somebody else and deciding what interpretation is, in each artefact, privileged. Interpretation will then certainly prove a key-process in the act of representing the writer, oscillating between objectivity and subjectivity, abstraction and materiality but also fact and fiction. To sum up, the corpus of works considered here will include documents which are all eminently visual in nature and which originate from three different media that have become means of mass communication: photography, cinema and television. My hypothesis is that productions of this kind, which are not primarily of literary nature and whose creation is not in the hands of the writer, nevertheless form a paratextual (or, more precisely, epitextual) mediasphere that says, or rather shows, much about the basic literary notions of *écrivain* and *auteur* as well as about the context in which they were produced.

When Genette mentions "*zone indécise*" as a possible description for the paratext, he actually quotes Claude Duchet who sees this zone as a conjunction of codes both textual and social. Genette and Duchet's conception of the paratext insinuates that there is

more to the paratext and its constituents than a matter of literature and writing. I shall therefore presume that the epitextual documents analyzed in what follows (photographic portraits, films and televisual extracts) are also revealing of the social, intellectual, economic, aesthetic and cultural environments in which the writers that they depict were situated. Such a viewpoint makes it possible to reconcile the two perspectives offered by the notion of *écrivain* as an entity fully located in specific time and place and by that of *auteur* as a product of the text partly influenced by the cultural and aesthetic values of the context. In this respect, my approach echoes Ferrari and Nancy's following analysis in which they liken the presence of the author to a "*caractère*", playing on the polysemy of the word which means at the same time "personality" and "type", "typography" or "letter" in French.

> [L'auteur] n'est pas un fantôme inconsistant projeté sur l'œuvre. C'est l'idiosyncrasie de l'œuvre, ou bien son *iconographie* en ce sens bien précis : la *graphie* de l'œuvre – son « écriture », sa manière, sa propriété insubstituable – y devient *icône* – figure, emblème figural, hypostase, visage. On pourrait dire que l'auteur forme ou contient le *caractère* de l'œuvre : c'est-à-dire sa configuration propre, sa figure insubstituable et inaliénable[20]. (36)

If the author can be conceptualized as an internal elusive presence, like a watermark under the surface of the work, my objective is to question whether the same is true for visual representations and to determine the presence of pictorial signs of auctority.

My focus then is not writers' bibliographies but their iconographies, that is, the various images in which they appear, keeping in mind that the invention of modern media

[20] "[The author] is not a flimsy phantom projected onto the work. He/she is the idiosyncrasy in the work, or its *iconography* in the following exact sense: the *graphic* mark of the work – its « writing », its manner, its irreplaceable propriety – becomes in him/her an *icon* – a figure, an emblem, a hypostasis, a face. It could be said that the author forms or contains the *character* of the work, that is, its specific configuration, its irreplaceable and inalienable figure."

and the development of visual culture not only accelerated the production of these images but also clearly modified the writer's relationships to others, and to readers in particular.

> On consomme maintenant la voix et l'image de l'écrivain avant d'avoir lu une seule ligne de son livre, on le lit pour l'avoir vu parler dans les médias. Il entre dans « la machine à gloire qu'est l'écriture imprimée », elle-même concurrencée par les médias actuels et le cinéma. Les médias sont des instances de consécration, mais aussi de *standardisation*.
>
> Ce que le texte cachait de l'auteur est aujourd'hui présenté au public. Il peut, avec la quatrième de couverture, avoir accès à l'image de l'auteur et le reconnaître sur l'écran de télévision … On trouve également, en librairie, des photographies d'écrivains ... Le lecteur s'approprie l'image de son auteur. Dans des *postures médiatiques*, l'auteur vivant participe à une présentation de sa personne [et] de son œuvre[21]. (Bernas 343 & 363, my emphasis)

Bernas's comments point to two additional aspects to bear in mind when considering literary iconographies and the possible presence of an auctorial *caractère* in them. As stressed earlier by Riel, representations of writers have historically fluctuated between generic standardized images emphasizing the literary calling as a categorizing status and identifiable individualized images emphasizing the individual. This particularity will have to be taken into account and so will another which Bernas refers to in the last sentence of the aforementioned quote. Indeed, even though the writers studied here were not strictly speaking responsible for the images that were made of them, they somewhat

[21] "We now consume the writer's voice and image before reading one line of his/her book; we read his/her books because we have seen him/her speak in the media. He/she comes in « the fame machine that printed writing is », and that is itself in competition with the current media and the cinema. The media are consecrating but also *standardizing* authorities.
What the text used to hide from the author is now presented to the public. They can have access to the author's image with the book's back cover and recognize him/her on a TV screen … Photographs of writers can also be found in book stores … The reader appropriates the author's image. The living author, through *media postures*, takes part in a presentation his/her person [and] his/her work."

participated in their creation, if only by taking part voluntarily or not in the process and by adopting these "*postures médiatiques*" cited by Bernas.

As a consequence, my analysis will notably draw on the socio-critical theories formulated by José-Luis Diaz and Jérôme Meizoz, in the wake of Bourdieu and Viala. In *L'Ecrivain imaginaire* and *Devenir Balzac*, Diaz develops the concepts of "*scénographie auctoriale*" ("auctorial scenography") and "*scénario auctorial*" so as to examine the situations of writers in the nineteenth century. He first distinguishes three different levels in the notion: the "*auteur réel*" ("real author") or human being living in real life, the "*auteur textuel*" ("textual author") that corresponds to the name on the book cover and the textual subject in charge of the discourses, genre, style, etc. and, finally, the "*écrivain imaginaire*" ("the imaginary writer") which refers to an imagined, representative figure standing for how the author represents himself or lets himself or has himself be represented. Interested in the history of representations, Diaz explores the auctorial function in its social and aesthetic dimensions by positing that the *écrivain imaginaire* is an image, a representation or even a myth that a writer strives to embody through his/her behavior as well as through his/her writing. Consciously or unconsciously, it is for this person an aim to achieve that will influence his/her career and so structure his/her trajectory on the literary scene. For Diaz, the *écrivain imaginaire* is a sort of ideal that writers can only reach by adhering to auctorial scenarios, or multilayered models varying according to genres, periods and even generations or groups. More precisely, "ces *paradigmes civilisationnels* [dépassant le cadre strict de la littérature] fonctionnent à titre de matrices préalables à l'acte d'écrire. Informant les opinions comme les attitudes, ils

assignent aussi bien des modèles existentiels que des choix esthétiques à ceux qui s'y réfèrent[22]" (*Ecrivain* 78).

Very few writers actually devise their own original *scenario* so that auctorial scenarios are mainly pre-existing generic patterns prescribing attitudes, lifestyles, and "*manières d'écrivain*" ("writer's manners", *Ecrivain* 278) that are typical of a particular auctorial identity. According to Diaz, the choice of a scenario amounts to a "*production de soi*" ("production of one's self", *Ecrivain* 128) for writers and is certainly not limited to beginners because writers are bound to reinvent themselves during their career and adapt to new conditions. To give full account of how the *écrivain imaginaire* works as a representation, the critic finally resorts to the theatrical metaphor of "*scénographie auctoriale*" so to characterize the changing repertoire of existing positions or images, specifying that, he conceptualizes the notion as a mobile space which, like a stage, can comprise other actors intervening in the writer's identity construction: "Lorsqu'on fixe une nouvelle image d'écrivain, c'est en fait tout un *espace* scénographique qui se trouve redéfini. Un rôle y est donné à d'autres acteurs périphériques nécessaires à l'effet d'ensemble[23]" (*Ecrivain* 48, my emphasis).

When insisting on a spatial metaphorical configuration for the analysis of the image(s) of writers, Diaz echoes Bourdieu's equally spatial conception of the literary field as does Jérôme Meizoz when, instead of using "position" or "scenario", he favors

[22] "These *civilizational paradigms* [that exceed the strict limits of literature] work as matrices that exist prior to the act of writing. Informing opinions as well as behaviors, they prescribe existential models and aesthetic choices to those who refer to them."

[23] "When a new writer's image is set, it is actually a whole scenographic space that is redefined. A role is given in it to other peripheric actors that are necessary to the whole effect."

"*posture*" in his works. A literary or auctorial posture is a position taken by writers on the literary scene through intratextual and extratextual, discursive and non-discursive strategies. It can also be described as a professional role, a public image, or "un fait d'individuation" ("a way of individualizing oneself", *Postures* 27) endorsed by writers. Like Diaz's auctorial scenography, Meizoz's posture appears to function like a sort of interface between writers and the public. A posture is a way for writers of communicating who they are or they mean to be to the public. As such, it is programmatic in the sense that it contributes to professional and artistic identification and suggests a horizon of expectations (*Postures* 31). For Meizoz, a literary posture can also be turned into a media strategy in our media-saturated society for it is an image that can be easily circulated and therefore imposed in collective imagination. More than Diaz's "scenography", Meizoz's "posture" emphasizes the writer's participation in the fashioning of his/her auctorial self to the point that he describes it as being primarily a form of "*façonnement de soi*" ("self-fashioning"). As a result, a posture can be seen as a means by which writers can intervene in the mediation of their image(s) and get some control over their representation(s). Like Diaz however, Meizoz insists that auctorial postures are based on a subtle articulation between generic characteristics and personal singularities that are merged and actualized through various mechanisms or techniques that expand beyond the text in writers' attitudes, habits, dress codes, speeches, or portraits. Following Marit Grøtta's terminological choice in her study on Baudelaire and media aesthetics, I shall use the word "*dispositif*" ("dispositive") to label these specific mechanisms by which auctorial

postures and scenarios not only set up a specific image of the writer but also shape and guide our perception of the same writer.

Because of the instability of the notions *écrivain* and *auteur* and their predisposition to contextual influence, the writers under examination here will have to be placed in context. The postulate is that images of writers not only reflect how successive media have dealt with the genre of the portrait but also how every writer is perceived both as an individual and a representative of a cultural category at the moment when the representation is made. The period covered goes from the middle of the nineteenth century, a period which, as famously stated by Baudelaire, saw the advent of a civilization infatuated with images, and the late twentieth century. The writers considered, Charles Baudelaire, Colette and Romain Gary, lived through times when the world of visual media was undergoing major changes due to the advent of new technologies, respectively, photography, cinema and television. Through the analysis of visual artefacts related to these French writers, this project seeks to examine the role of visual culture in the fashioning of writers' artistic and social identities and to determine to what extent the interaction between literature and visual culture has intensified since the nineteenth century and the successive phases of media history. The choice of writers and temporal structure will hopefully help highlight some significant moments of media crisis when a shift in media predominance was bound to modify the content and the process of representation.

Contending that images of writers are undervalued testimonies of the changing situation of literature over time and of its relations to other media, I mean to analyze the

relationships between literature and visual culture in a diachronic perspective by focusing not so much on the product of literature (books) as on the producer (the writer) because the visual representation of the writer appears to be a question that has not been given much consideration, at least less than its linguistic counterpart. When literary studies have long been questioning the status and significance of the author as an aesthetic, historical and sociological construction and a supposed figure of authority to be found within a text, very little attention has been given to the author as an entity constructed outside the text, and more particularly in media other than the book where the author is not the only one to be in charge of the act of representation. The following chapters therefore present three case studies bringing together a medium and a writer so as to examine how the advent of new media have impacted the construction of the figures of the *écrivain* and *auteur* in French culture since the nineteenth century.

The first chapter focuses on the paradoxical relationship that existed between Baudelaire (1821-1867) and photography in the mid-nineteenth century when the world of literature itself was torn between enthusiasm and reluctance when faced with this invention that forever modified the perception and representation of reality. The next chapter explores the simultaneous popularization of the cinema and multimedia fame of female writer Colette (1873-1954) and how they exemplify the modern development of celebrity culture and the visual fashioning of the literary self in the first half of the twentieth century. Finally, the third chapter is devoted to Romain Gary (1914-1980) and television in the post-World War II period when the literary talk show became a new crucial parameter in the construction of a literary career. By considering three writers

who engaged actively in confronting the emergence of new visual media in the time of their career, I hope to demonstrate that the persistent hiatus in the writer's status between writing (an act of non-presence) and appearing (an act of bodily presence) has characterized the relation between literature and visual culture since at least the nineteenth century.

Chapter 1. Portraying the writer in time of crisis: Baudelaire and photography

IDENTIFYING BAUDELAIRE

A curious apparition

fig.2. The Arnauldet portrait by Carjat

In 2014, the Musée d'Orsay in Paris acquired a photograph attributed to photographer Étienne Carjat which is thought to be the fifteenth surviving photographic portrait of poet Charles Baudelaire (fig.2). Only, the picture is no conventional portrait, with the carefully studied pose and staged background displayed by most photographs of the time; and, what is more, the person identified as Baudelaire is not the main subject of the picture. The photograph in question was part of a family album comprising other portraits, the sitters of which have not been identified, except for this particular shot. As specified by a note underneath that necessarily excludes him from the family, the man in

the foreground is “Mr Arnauldet” [sic]. “Who then was Mr Arnauldet?”, is a question that Serge Plantureux, the photograph collector who discovered the picture, sought to solve to support his hypothesis that the second, obviously improvised, sitter behind the curtain is Baudelaire. Plantureux’s investigation[24] led him to Thomas and Paul Arnauldet. Thomas Arnauldet, an epicurean bibliophile and a short-time librarian at the Bibliothèque nationale was apparently an acquaintance of Baudelaire’s (Dupuis). A specialist of caricatures and prints who wrote a review for the Parisian *Salon* of 1857, he had these interests in common with the poet who published essays on caricaturists in the 1850s and several *Salon* reviews. As for Paul Arnauldet, he was a bibliophile whose collection included an original edition of Baudelaire’s *Fleurs du mal* and whose personal ex libris was designed by Bracquemond, the artist who also engraved Baudelaire’s portrait in the second edition of his poems. Although nothing fully excludes Paul Arnauldet, Plantureux thinks that the sitter here is Thomas. In the same way, albeit nothing corroborates the hypothesis, it is quite possible to conceive that Arnauldet and Baudelaire might have come together to Carjat’s studio that day so as to be photographed by one of the most renowned Parisian masters of photography.

This photograph now designated as “M. Arnauldet, ou Charles Baudelaire surpris dans l’atelier d’Étienne Carjat” (“Mr Arnauldet, or Charles Baudelaire surprised in Etienne Carjat’s studio”) was obviously not meant to be a group portrait: it appears rather to be the result of an unexpected incongruous mishap in the image-making process by

24 For a detailed description of Plantureux’s research on this picture, see: Jérôme Dupuis, “Une photographie inédite: Un air de Baudelaire”, *L’Express*, http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/photographie-inedite-un-air-de-baudelaire_1301028.html

which what was not supposed to be seen came to be photographed and, subsequently, lastingly fixed on paper. But why then develop this photographic accident?

> A un moment, le photographe, ou l'un de ses assistants placé légèrement sur la droite, a peut-être vu Baudelaire passer la tête derrière la toile de fond et a déclenché son appareil, imagine Plantureux. Car pourquoi faire un tirage de ce négatif, qui présente une large déchirure et des imperfections dues à des bulles, pourquoi garder les marges, ce qui est plutôt inhabituel, si ce n'est parce que le personnage intéressant se trouve au second plan[25]? (Dupuis)

The second part of Plantureux's proposition indeed concerns the possibility of dating the photograph. According to him, the picture was taken at the end of 1861, a period when Baudelaire was working for a newspaper launched by Carjat, *Le Boulevard*, whose December 1st, 1861 issue alludes to a portrait of the poet made by the Parisian photographer. It was also the period when Baudelaire was preparing his application to be a member of the *Académie Française*, hence the potential interest of this photograph, which, although it went against the codes of the photographic portrait, showed a man who may have been about to become one of the *Immortels* ("Immortals") of the prestigious Academy. What reinforced Plantureux's conviction that there was, in this damaged imperfect picture, an unknown portrait of the poet is also the existence of several documented photographs of Baudelaire authored by Etienne Carjat in the 1860s.

Even though Baudelaire and Arnauldet may have been friends and even though they may have come together at Carjat's studio, there was certainly nothing planned in the two men being together in this picture. Interestingly, the two men appear here to

[25] "Plantureux imagines that at one moment, the photographer, or one of his assistants standing slightly on the right, may have seen Baudelaire show his head behind the backdrop and set off his machine. Why print this negative, which has a large tear and imperfections due to bubbles, why keep the margins, which is rather unusual, if not because the interesting person is in the background?"

embody two attitudes that were common in photographers' studios at that time. Arnauldet's posture and slightly diverted look suggest that he is on the lookout, preparing himself for the moment when the photographer will take his picture. He is the self-conscious sitter currently under the photographer's consideration; he knows that he is about to be immortalized and that all eyes, human and mechanical, are on him. The tension in his body shows that this is no ordinary moment for him as he is presently aware of being an object of attention for the photographer who is on the verge of turning him into a visual and artistic object. What he probably does not know, however, is that he is also observed by someone standing behind him. The male figure, partial and blurred, that is yet visible in the background has a very different attitude. He is the Peeping Tom, the curious client who spies on other clients and on the photographer to try to unveil the mystery of photography, as both a scientific feat and a meticulous ritual choreographed by the expert who masters the art of transforming reality into an accurate life-like portable picture. These two figures sum up the polarized reactions that photography, in the first phase of its history, triggered in many people: on the one hand, an eagerness to participate in the phenomenon that was to forever change the relationship that human kind had with the picture as a vehicle for art and communication; on the other hand, a mistrustful yet puzzled reserve in the face of a technical wonder that evoked magic as much as science. They accordingly stand in stark opposition: one is seated in the foreground while the other is standing in the background; one is vulnerably offered to gazes while the other is hiding behind a screen as if for anonymity or protection; one is a clear identifiable image while the other is a hazy shape; one gave his name as the

unquestionable subject of the portrait; the other, caught in the act ("*surpris*") of observing while thinking himself unobserved is an alternative in the picture's title ("*ou*"["or"]), an intruder who forced his way into another man's portrait, a specter whose identity is not even established with utter certainty.

Making sense of an incongruity

Indeed, as mentioned above, this photograph has been *interpreted* as showing Baudelaire, despite the lack of clarity in the facial features of the man in the background that prevents indubitable identification. In the portrait, "cette image qui se veut porteuse d'une révélation[26]" (*Identités* 7), a faceless human being is a human being without an identity, so how is it possible to identify this man as the poet known as Baudelaire? The lack of definition in the features of the face popping up behind the screen makes it an enigma, an abstruse sign to be decrypted by the viewer despite the indistinctness of a body part that is usually the primary criterion to establish identity. Unnatural and out of the ordinary, this occurrence of facelessness made possible by photography is a radical manifestation of the process of "facialization" theorized by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. According to them, the human face does not "come ready-made" (168); it is a surface that is constantly actualized through a process of coding that "[orders] matter as it is drawn into a body" (Smith and Protevi) to produce individualized faces. In other words, faces "are engendered by *an abstract machine of faciality (visagéité)*, which

[26] "This image that is supposed to be the bearer of a revelation."

produces them at the same time as it gives the signifier its white wall and subjectivity its black hole" (168). The proximity of the body gives the head its significance as head and part of the body. The face, however, is "deterritorialized," or out of the reach of habits, and it is only when "reterritorialized" or reinvested by habit that it gets meaning: as stressed by Deleuze and Guattari, "the head, all the volume-cavity elements of the head, *have to* be facialized" (170, my emphasis) so that a face can be imposed on the individual by the viewer and the individual can become a subject with an identity.

More crucially than in any ordinary situation, the man's blurry face in this photograph is a white wall: it is a surface on which signs can be projected by the viewer as described by Deleuze and Guattari but it simultaneously – and almost literally – has black holes, as dark spots are discernible within the roundish white shape recognized as a head. A shadowy landscape, the man's face is fully deterritorialized by the action of photography which has blurred the features. The unconscious automatic process by which we continuously impose faces on people (that is, the abstract machine of faciality) has here to be applied with more intent to reveal a face attributable to Baudelaire. For the two thinkers, faciality is at the intersection of two semiotic strata, *signifiance* ("signifier-ness") and subjectification, which means that the roundish white shape in the picture should not only be decoded as a white wall on which signs are inscribed but as a system of black holes in which the embedded "consciousness, passion and redundancies" (167) of the individual construct him as a particular subject. Identifying a face also implies reterritorializing it by relying on habit: in this circumstance, when the action of the

faciality machine is compromised by the elusiveness of the image, the reterritorialization is double, and its second stage (subjectification) is linked to the very nature of the image.

As signs, the shape, aspect and dark spots of the surface within the head can easily be interpreted as denoting a face, and even a male white face, so that the first phase of *signifiance* is effortlessly achieved by whoever takes a look at this picture: *there is a human face that shows up behind the screen in the background* is thus a simple conclusion to come to. Assigning an identity to this face, on the contrary, requires some familiarity not only with the generic appearance of human faces but with French culture. The only possible way to decipher the spectral figure is to have some knowledge of pictures that present similar elements: only through comparison with previously encountered pictures will this image gain familiarity and this face be fully reterritorialized. The specificity of this photograph, which unusually portrays an unwilling sitter in a most unclear representation when photography was praised for its mimetic truthfulness, exacerbates a key issue inherent to the portrait as a form of representation: “The question of identification and how congruent an image is with a perceived exterior reality has [indeed] always been central in portraiture” (Soussloff 6). What is at stake in the deciphering of this blurry figure is the relevance of the concepts of truth claim and referential representation in the genre of the photographic portrait.

Identity in the age of photography

Commenting on the influence that the appearance of photography had on visual perception and the determination of identities in the 19th century, Nancy Armstrong remarks: "Here was a culture predisposed to consider photography as the ultimate mimetic technology, a process capable of making an exact copy of actual things and people, a copy for which the referent could be sought and named well after photograph had been taken" (126). As a new medium, photography was then distinguished for its ability to generate lifelike indexical representations of people and things, that is, representations in which signs can stand in for their objects through an existential link, establishing a material connection between the image and reality (Emerling 64). When used for portraiture, photography was consequently expected to deliver a faithful recognizable rendition of the person portrayed. Needless to say, the Arnauldet/Baudelaire portrait, with its involuntary defacing of the background man, suggests that photography, although a technology based on a scientific chemical procedure, was not unfailingly reliable in giving an accurate mimetic representation of the world. The technicality and volatility of the method was such that accidents and malfunctions could happen and compromise this mission. The invention of photography nevertheless brought about a new mode of recognition that has now become prominent and by which the process of recognition has been reversed: whereas for centuries the image of a person was judged according to its resemblance with the actual person, more and more frequently in modern culture real persons are judged relative to the resemblance that they bear to the images

made of themselves. Accordingly, Michel Frizot, insisting on the primacy of the visual, analyzes identity as being a relation of correspondence between one being and one image.

> *Identité* dérive du latin *idem*, « le même » et désigne « le caractère de ce qui est identique à autre chose ». Faire preuve de son identité, c'est montrer qu'on est bien identique à soi-même et qu'il n'y a pas de confusion possible avec un autre. Mais, pour cela, il faut *identifier*, reconnaître l'identité ; en l'occurrence, déclarer qu'un être et une image sont « identiques » jusqu'à disparition du doute. Plus exactement, c'est se persuader que, si différences il y a, elles ne sont pas significatives[27]. (*Identités* 8)

The putative portrait of Baudelaire in Arnauldet's portrait is representative of how the notion of identity has been impacted by the development of photography that provided people with a new medium to read the world, shaping not only their vision but also their subsequent understanding of it. The advent of mass visuality which resulted from the popularization of photography and the proliferation of images in modern society produced yet another variation in the process of identification that is underscored by Armstrong: "As a method of reading, [photography] reversed the priorities of object over images, so that the image usurped the position of the individual body as the basis for legibility" (19). Undermined in its position of primary element of comparison, the physical tangible body is no longer indispensable to establish the identity of an individual: its image is enough. Allowing access to the reality of things and people by proxy, the photographic image became a legitimate element to draw comparisons and

[27] "*Identity* derives from Latin *idem*, "the same", and designates "the nature of what is identical to something else". To prove one's identity is to show that one is indeed identical to one's self and that there is no possible confusion with someone else. To achieve this, however, it is necessary to *identify*, to acknowledge the similarity, that is to say, to declare that one being and one image are "identical" to such extent that there is no doubt left. More exactly, it implies convincing oneself that if there are differences, they are not significant."

conclusions about identity. To reword Frizot's comment, identifying can now also mean stating, not that one being and one image are identical, but that one image and one image are identical. With the possibility of photographic portraits, allegedly true to life and trustworthy, the image, after centuries of distrust and accusations of being deceptively imitative[28], became a guarantee of truth and a legitimate provider of knowledge.

Simultaneously, the production of multiple pictures of the same person has favored the emergence of a form of visual intertextuality, or *interpictoriality* if such a term can be coined, which encompasses pictures of various sorts and relates them in an endless transhistorical dialogue generating echoes, imitations, allusions and references of all kinds. Such a phenomenon, which invites comparisons and connections between works, proves essential when it comes to deciphering an image such as the cryptic portrait of Baudelaire in Arnauldet's photograph: in this instance of what John Fiske called "horizontal intertextuality" (108), or the existence of references between works of the same nature, it is not the altogether impossible comparison between a man and an image but the comparison between an image and an image that can reveal the secret of the enigmatic blurry man's identity.

Linda Hutcheon, when studying movie adaptation and its variable reception by spectators, distinguishes the "knowing" audience, who, having read the book, is able to identify the literary intertext, and the "unknowing" audience, who is not (125). The same distinction can apply here: the "unknowing" viewers will not be able to go beyond the

28 On historical iconophobia, especially in religious contexts, of images, see Michel Melot, *L'Illustration: Histoire d'un art*. Paris: Skira, 1984.

first phase of reterritorialization posited by Deleuze and Guattari and will only see a man in the blurry figure in the background but the "knowing" viewers, acquainted with Carjat's long-known portraits of Baudelaire (fig. 3 & 4), will be able to identify the man as Baudelaire.

fig.3. Portrait with a bow (Carjat)

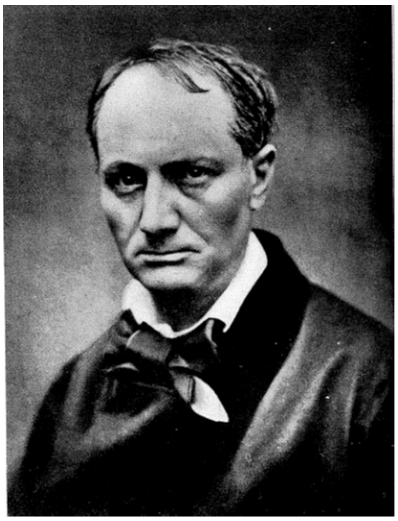

fig.4. Head and shoulder picture (Carjat)

The physiognomy of the head, the high brow, the deep dark eyes, the short hair, the white collar and the ample long jacket are signs that appear in the photographs of the poet taken by Carjat in 1861 – and regularly published or exhibited after Baudelaire's death. It is not unreasonable therefore to conclude that the hiding man is Baudelaire and that this picture probably dates from the same period. The hypothesis is corroborated by additional materials such as Baudelaire's own self-portraits or some written testimonies left by his friends. The poet's drawings dating from these years display the same distinctive appearance with the short receding hair, the emaciated face, the thin mouth and the small

deep-set piercing eyes; while Lorédan Larchey, describes the poet in 1861 in these evocative terms: "Tondue de près, la tête sortait droite d'une sorte de lainage rouge … La face, rasée entièrement, se découpait anguleuse et sèche comme celle d'un ascétique … sous l'arcade sourcillière [sic], deux yeux noirs aigus, pénétrants, luisaient d'un éclat particulier[29]" (Bandy & Pichois 31). His friend, Nadar insists too, like others, on the blackness of his eyes ("deux points noirs" ["two black dots"], Pichois & Avice 58). These details together with the specificity of the clothes turn out to be helpful when identifying the poet's accidental portrait as they situate it in time and give it an identity. All these signs, physical and material, constitute "the barest essentials required for resemblance" (Soussloff 47) in this singular case of photographic identification.

The process by which one is able to recognize Baudelaire in the photograph after seeing Carjat's shots attests to how some images retain some hold on our imagination and our memory to the point of becoming a form of knowledge. Interpictorial references that do not form in the imagination of the reader but rather in the eye of the beholder can then interact and generate meaning. Without prior exposure to Carjat's portraits, it is indeed almost impossible to make sense of the mask-like cipher that usurps the place of the face in the Arnauldet portrait. The 1861 photographs of the poet truly are what triggers the act of *re*-cognition in this case: having remained alive in memory, they are like residual images that are re-actualized by the perception of the hazy Baudelairian stimulus figure. On the one hand, the deciphering of this picture exemplifies what Catherine Soussloff

[29] "His head emerged, closely-cropped, very upright, from a sort of red woolen garment. His completely shaven face stood out, as angular and lean as the face of an ascetic … under the arch of the eyebrows, two black eyes, sharp and penetrating, shone with particular brightness."

sees as the viewer's indispensable involvement in the decoding of portraits (120); on the other hand, the necessity of prior acquaintance with Carjat's work confirms the idea that, from the nineteenth century on, visual literacy has supplemented linguistic literacy as a foundation of knowledge, contributing to "a new arrangement of knowledge" (Crary 17) as noted by Jérôme Thélot: "*révolutionnaire,* la photographie l'est d'abord comme mode de diffusion des savoirs, procédé médiatique remplaçant une technique antérieure moins rapide[30]" (16). In an image-ridden modern culture, there emerged a mode of viewing and relating images that has contributed to structure cultural memory on a visual level. Implying visual memory, visual media literacy and the very existence of mass visuality that came to provide permanent exposure to man-made images, it testifies to the "increasingly visual basis of cultural experience" (Armstrong 274) which expanded in Baudelaire's century.

More accessible as it required no specific talent, more rapid in its production of images and more accurate than any hand-drawn depiction, photography offered new ways of not only representing but recording what the world is like. It affected memory, collective and individual, and how people would now be able to form images and recollections of things and people that they had not even actually seen in person: a photograph was the possibility of a second-hand perceptual experience, beforehand perceived, framed and fixed by another gaze. People would now share images on a large scale and have common visual criteria to read the world. More and more widely available

[30] "Photography in the first place was revolutionary as a form of disseminating knowledge and a medium that replaced a previous technique that was far less rapid."

as the century wore on, photography contributed to the expansion of communal knowledge as it gave people access to what was remotely distant, whether in space or in time. As theorized by Roland Barthes and his laconic "*ça-a-été*" ("it was", *Chambre Claire* 120), a photograph was tangible evidence that people and things had been present in this world: it made it possible to locate them – in time, in space, in cultural space, in social hierarchy or in the realm of physicality. From the very beginning, many felt consequently that there was an intrinsic archival function in photography. In an era when the population was identified as the masses – a word connoting indistinct faceless, swarming multitudes – photographic portraits were meant not so much to document family situations or changes in physical appearance as to identify people, especially socially: they were used to situate people in the world and let the world know where they stood in society and what part of society they identified with. By resorting to photography, almost everybody – and not only some social elite as formerly with painted portraits – could produce knowledge about themselves, and, what is more, a controlled form of knowledge through which they could stage and assert their identity.

Without going as far as Victor Hugo who, with the famous observation in *Notre Dame de Paris* "*ceci tuera cela*" ("this will kill that"), commented on the intellectual and cultural shift entailed by the invention of the printing press as challenging the authority of the church (209), it is not so radical to envision the advent of photography as fundamentally modifying modes of representation, identification and knowledge. The complex decoding process by which one can finally recognize Baudelaire in the Arnauldet photograph tells much about how, thanks to the invention of photography,

images of this period have lastingly survived and come down to us, and how some of them have left a memorable trace in visual culture to the point of being still identifiable today. Photography has thus decisively impacted the collective imagination: the mass circulation of pictures that was made possible boosted the development of visual culture in an unprecedented way and created an ever-expanding collection of images whose ubiquity was at the basis of a new collective visual knowledge, if not a new collective visual language. To paraphrase André Malraux's concept of the *Musée imaginaire* as a virtual museum conjuring up in the human mind the masterpieces of art, photography has enabled the constitution, in the wider realm of visual culture, of a virtual gallery of portraits, of which Carjat's pictures of Baudelaire are literary members, representing the meeting point of two competing modes of expression in the nineteenth century, photography and literature. If these images are surely part of the French national visual *Panthéon*[31] of authors, they are also evidence of a paradox. For whoever knows Baudelaire's *Salon de 1859* and his diatribe against photography, their very existence is intriguing and it is all the more so since a total of fifteen photographic portraits still exist, suggesting that Baudelaire, despite his claimed dislike of the medium, was actually no stranger to photography and to photographers' studios.

[31] The Panthéon is a building in Paris where the remains of distinguished citizens (politicians, artists, writers, etc.) are preserved; it metaphorically refers to a virtual body of particularly famous personalities.

THE BAUDELAIRE PARADOX

"Tout pour l'oeil[32]"

Charles Baudelaire's passion for the visual arts is a well-established fact and one that has often been studied in relation to his writings (Castex, Hannoosh, Pichois and Avice). Yann Le Pichon and Claude Pichois estimated that, all texts and genres included, the poet-critic mentioned 450 artists in his works (40) – a quantitative clue which, together with the collection that he constituted despite his chronic financial problems, reveal the vast extent of his interest and knowledge in the matter. A portrait by Etienne Carjat (fig.5) known nowadays as "Baudelaire aux gravures" ("Baudelaire with engravings") even immortalized this interest by showing the poet against a background of sketches that is a reminder that, above all else, Baudelaire had a predilection for the arts of the paintbrush and the pencil.

fig.5. Baudelaire aux gravures

[32] "All for the eye", in *Oeuvres Complètes* I: 103. Abbreviated as '*OC* I' for volume I and '*OC* II' for volume II in further reference.

Consequently, not only are references to pictorial artworks and artists regularly disseminated in his poems, but, in many of them, the linguistic material is also structured by the eye of an art amateur who made pictorial art an essential constituent of his composition. The poet's borrowing of pictorial techniques is recurrent and frequently used as early as the title or subtitle of the text. Several of his poems are, for instance, designated as pieces of visual art: "Une Martyre" (*OC* I: 111) is defined as a "dessin d'un maître inconnu" ("a drawing by an unknown master") in its subtitle while "Portraits de maîtresses" and "Une Gravure fantastique" invite the reader to enter an interart world where, although verbally formulated, the visual is dominant. More generally, motifs related to visual art and vision are essential to the poet's aesthetics, confirming the centrality of optical stimulation as a source of inspiration and model for poetic creation. As it is, the gaze, as the provider of visual experiences, works hand in hand with memory to allow the poet to create images in his poems in which memories of artworks and other particular visions are actually perceptible. In a complementary way, the experience of visual artworks enables Baudelaire to punctuate his poetry with interart analogies such as "Portraits de maîtresses" or "dessin d'un maître inconnu" that call upon intertextuality to exploit the transferability of visual models into poetic writing. Now, such analogies and transfers between literature and pictorial art are only possible by virtue of a gaze that is highly sensitized to the aesthetic power of art and familiar with its complexities; also, Baudelaire, writing in the 19th century, had to give an account of a new kind of gaze and a new kind of visual experience.

In the poet's world, or in other words in the fast-changing crowded modern Paris of the nineteenth century, the gaze mediates visions that can awaken stirring impressions in the mind. What Walter Benjamin called "shocks," these over-stimulations that originate from the collision between human consciousness and the increasingly turbulent outside world, are echoed in Baudelaire's image of the duel in "Le Confiteor de l'artiste" ("L'étude du beau est un duel où l'artiste crie de frayeur avant d'être vaincu[33]" *OC* I:278). Benjamin indeed interprets the image as referring to the human mediation of the external environment and its stimuli, concluding that "the shock experience [is] at the very center of [the poet's] artistic work" because "the duel is [nothing but] the creative process itself" (*Writer* 178). Because the French capital in the 19th century saw the unprecedented simultaneous explosion of its population and of mass visuality that multiplied visual stimuli through the proliferation of posters, electricity, or even bustling crowds, the experience of perceptual shock is closely related to the context of the modern city. As described by Baudelaire in "A une passante", where a brief exchange of looks between the poet and a female passer-by is enough to rouse passionate feelings, the movement of the masses in the metropolis, together with the countless forms of stimulation through visual contact, provides unexpected opportunities for shock. Part of his poetic aesthetics therefore integrates this metropolitan context that assails the poet – or his alter-ego, the *flâneur* – with constant multiple visual stimuli so that the artist is endlessly over-stimulated and engaged in a combat to extract aestheticism from this undifferentiated mass of stimuli and instill it into his poetic creation. Even more

[33] "The contemplation of Beauty is a duel where the artist screams with terror before being vanquished."

importantly, the figure of the *flâneur*, moving as he does among the crowds, the lights, and other wonders of the metropolis, is "characterized by a specific *optique* – a mobile gaze that wanders about randomly, as it were" (Grøtta 5). In this perspective, he is the embodiment of a new attitude as much as a new way of seeing. In this emblematic figure, there are conflated two key-elements of Baudelaire's aesthetics, the visual and mobility.

"A kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness," (*OC* II: 708) the urban poet Baudelaire was a privileged experiencer of modernity and the new visual environment in the sense that he had the aptitude not only to experience shocks but to turn these shocks into works of art. Furthermore, his penchant for visual arts was so powerful that, undeniably, the art amateur in him influenced the poet. The significant use of pictorial techniques and visual imagery designates a man of letters who had a keen sensitivity to visual aesthetics, and to the images produced by art in particular. He formulated his tribute to the power of images on several occasions and notably in *Mon Coeur mis à nu* where he famously formulated his desire to glorify the cult of images ("glorifier le culte des images (ma grande, mon unique, ma primitive passion)[34]" (*OC* I: 701)). Obsessed with pictures and prophesizing the advent of their worship, the intensely sensitized author, over-stimulated by the countless shocks produced by his environment, accordingly saturated his poems with visual motifs and images that reflect his assimilation of visual culture. In "Un Cheval de race" for instance, he characteristically resorts to visual similes and metaphors to make an ambivalent portrait of an ugly woman who is characterized by the misleading title and the in-text metaphor "elle est fourmi,

[34] "To glorify the cult of images (my great, my one, my primitive passion."

araignée" ("she is an ant, a spider," *OC* I: 343) as hideously animal-like. Here, Baudelaire textually does what caricaturists and physiognomy – after a long tradition in Western pictorial art – profusely did in the 19th century, that is, to liken, through visual comparison, man and animal.

Interestingly, to be able to draw such imaginative comparisons, one, according to the poet, needs to have a specific capacity that he designates as "l'oeil du véritable amateur" ("the eye of the true amateur" *OC* I: 343) in this poem. This phrase echoes the "oeil expérimenté" ("the experienced eye") in "Les Veuves" (*OC* I: 292) and betrays Baudelaire's belief that "l'oeil" ("the eye") is a wonderful instrument for those who, like him, have developed an acute sense of vision and a capacity to see, beyond the superficial and the apparent, a transfiguration of reality. Several testimonies, such as the one by Nadar mentioned earlier ("deux points noirs"), underscore the unforgettable aspect of the poet's own look. As can be read in *Baudelaire devant ses contemporains*, those who left accounts of their encounters with the man were impressed by his look – described as dark, intense and piercing ("[des] yeux débordants de pensée" (17), "deux gouttes de café noir" (20), "un regard spirituel et profond" (22)[35]). Similarly, Carjat's portrait (fig.4) gives evidence of the alleged unique intensity of Baudelaire's gaze – as though he had managed somehow or other to have his physical appearance reflect his personal belief in the incomparable power of human eyes. Almost as telling is a drawing by the poet which offers original confirmation of the importance that he gave to sight above all other senses. Here is a symbolical representation of the lust for wealth by which he refers to his

35 "Thoughtful eyes", "two drops of black coffee", "a deep and spiritual look."

financial difficulties but what is revealing is that he did not conventionally represent his hands in the act of reaching for the money but his eyes trying to make contact with the coveted object, insinuating that the human look has the power to enable you to get what you see – if you know how to look at it. Beyond the symbolism of this representation, what is noticeable is the suggestion that the eye can be a powerful instrument of mediation, capable of transmitting inspiring pictures from the external world to the mind, but also of influencing the experience of external reality – including that of modernity.

L. C. Hamrick argues that, in Baudelaire's time, "it is precisely the faculty of *seeing* that becomes the vehicle by which one can begin to reach an understanding of what it means to be modern" (Ward 30). Taking Gautier as the representative of a community of artists who developed the very concept of modernity, Hamrick describes the particular quality of the "extraordinary eye" of those who share the same gift of sight, namely, not only an eye for modernity but an insatiable eye:

> "Never was an eye more avid than ours," confessed Gautier as he assumed the editorship of *L'Artiste* in 1856 ... The "avid eye" of Gautier is therefore no ordinary eye. On the one hand, this is the eye of a critic who has been charged with assessing the value of a literary or artistic work. On the other, it is also the eye of the "poet-artist" who has undergone practical training in art ... The instruction will leave its mark and the result will be a practiced eye, casting its sight both *outward*, toward the material world, and *inward*, toward the individual world of the poet-artist ... What we find is [also] an eye capable of setting in motion a kind of "transfer" mechanism by elements found in one context are transposed to another. (Ward 30-1)

Even though Baudelaire, strictly speaking and unlike Gautier, never underwent practical training in art but was rather trained in art by his readings, his innumerable visits to museums and the time he spent as a child in the studios of his father's friends (the

painters Naigeon and Ramey), the portrait drawn by Hamrick of the modern "seer", which builds on the Romantic idea of the artist as being indeed a sort of seer, quite corresponds to his situation. The man who defined modernity as the expression of the eternal in the fugitive had to be uncommonly perceptive to be able to see such phenomena at work. His unique way of seeing was at the origin of a similarly distinctive perception of the world. After comparing it to "un vaste dictionnaire" ("a vast dictionary," *OC* II: 624) in which art should find elements of inspiration to reinterpret in artistic forms in 1846, he confirmed his view in 1859: "tout l'univers visible n'est qu'un magasin d'images et de signes auxquels l'imagination donnera une place et une valeur relative[36]" (*OC* II: 627). Innately sensitive to images and visual stimuli, the eye of the poet Baudelaire is apt not only to detect the aesthetic quality that can show unexpectedly in the most banal scene and use it to fuel poetic inspiration; but also to assess visual art. Baudelaire's art criticism is evidence of his trained connoisseur's eye, or "oeil expérimenté" as he called it, and what is particularly important here is that it is with this singular eye that he was to judge the appearance of a new medium called photography.

Theorizing the cult of images

Like other authors of the century (Stendhal, Champfleury, Gautier, the Goncourt brothers or Zola), Baudelaire had art criticism among the strings on his bow. In the cultural field of the nineteenth century, art criticism was considered a bread-and-butter

[36] "All the visible universe is nothing but a shop of images and signs to which imagination will give a place and a relative value"

work for writers; that is why, for a long time, his writings on art were barely studied (*L'Année Baudelaire*[37] 7:37) despite the fact that they are incomparable sources to analyze his aesthetic thought and his interest in images. In these essays, the author who proclaimed himself an unquestioning devotee to the cult of images rationalized his passion for art and reflected on how it is created and how it changes. As his reflection became more refined, he developed a personal theory that overlapped with his poetry so that his texts on art appear to be one node in a network linking art criticism, aesthetic theory, prose and poetry. My hypothesis is that this same theory also influenced his response to photography and his demand for photographic pictures to be in harmony with his aesthetic credo. In his *Salon*[38] reviews, Baudelaire notably advocated the idea of correspondence between the arts as he did in his poetry ("le meilleur compte-rendu d'un tableau pourra être un sonnet ou une élégie[39]," *OC* II: 418). Beyond the bringing together of arts and genres, there are therefore echoes between his critical prose and his poetry which underscore the coherence in his aesthetic vision. His starting to write reviews of the *Salon* in the 1840s marks, however, a shift in perspective from the contemplating art amateur to the professional art critic writing about it. If he only gradually formed a theory on art, he was, from the very beginning, very assertive in his judgments. Enthusiastic, intuitive, and hypersensitive, he wrote reviews, articles and essays that would reflect his heartfelt partialities more than some dictates from the general consensus. By supporting artists whose art did not cause general agreement or giving little importance to the official

[37] From now on, abbreviated as *AB*.
[38] Since 1667, the Salon was a prestigious annual juried art exhibition organized by the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris.
[39] "The best review for a painting will be a sonnet or an elegy."

art sponsored by the Academy, he showed an autonomous critical mind characterized by its "originality and individuality" (*Ecrits* 8). Baudelaire's opiniated judgments on the art of his time are certainly fraught with subjectivity, but they also express a meticulous and far-reaching aesthetic thought that seeks to embrace more than the merits of the accepted painting exhibited at the *Salon*.

Analyzing the poetics of Baudelaire's art criticism, Timothy Raser remarked: "There is a logical progression behind the chronological sequence of the essays, and this evolution tells the story of Baudelaire's response to the constraints of aesthetic judgment" (15). Between 1845, which saw the publication of his first *Salon*, and 1864, when he wrote his last text related to art, "La Vente de la collection de M.E. Piot," the poet-critic indeed progressively formulated an aesthetic theory, evolving and highly subjective, which has been interpreted as founding an aesthetics of modernity. It is precisely because the independent-minded Baudelaire only gave credit to his personal judgments that he was no systematic thinker with a monolithic doctrine but rather an enthusiast who constantly revised his theory. In *L'Exposition Universelle* (1855), he himself underscored his incapacity to conform to an established permanent thought:

> J'ai essayé plus d'une fois ... de m'enfermer dans un système pour y prêcher à mon aise ... Et toujours mon système était beau, vaste, spacieux, commode, propre et lisse surtout ... Et toujours un produit spontané, inattendu, de la vitalité universelle venait donner un démenti à ma science enfantine et vieillotte ... J'avais beau déplacer en étendue le critérium, il était toujours en retard sur l'homme universel et courait sans cesse après le beau multiforme et versicolore, qui se meut dans les spirales infinies de la vie[40]. (*OC* II: 577)

[40] "I've attempted on several occasions … to lock myself into a system that would let me preach more comfortably …And yet my system was always beautiful, vast, spacious, commodious, clean and above all

Baudelaire wanted to capture the perpetual movement of the world and the "mouvement des arts" (*Ecrits* 12), that is, the ever-changing nature of what constitutes art in time. In the same way that he was perceptive of the increased speed of urban life that compelled the gaze of the *flâneur* to greater mobility, the aesthete Baudelaire was acutely aware of the mobility, or evolution, of art, especially in his own time. His search for a valid aesthetic theory therefore takes into account the ideas of constant rectification and diachronic perspective. The result is a critical work that is always in progress, integrating what was done before to better describe what exists in the present while going deeper into the theoretical timeless reflection on artistic creation. His art criticism is thus integrated into a broader consideration of the current situation of images and, for Marit Grøtta, this visual awareness is what characterizes Baudelaire's position when it comes to images.

Building on Bruno Latour's work on "the dispositives configuring both our perception and our mindset ... [and providing] models or metaphors for reflection upon the perceptual and mental processes (165)," Grøtta locates Baudelaire relative to three possible attitudes toward visualizing techniques and images: iconology, iconoclasm and iconophilia. Despite the poet's claimed devotion to images that could have placed him in the category of iconology as "a naïve belief in images," Grøtta argues that he is an "iconophile", albeit she concedes that his position is not altogether easy to grasp:

---

sleek … but some unexpected and spontaneous by-product of the vitality of existence was always giving the lie to my puerile and antiquated knowledge … No matter how much I moved or widened the criterion, it was always lagging behind the universal humanity, always trotting along behind beauty which, with all its multiplicity of form and color, moves in the infinite spirals of life."

> What then, was Baudelaire's attitude to images? Certainly, his love of images is well-known, and at times he seems close to the iconological position. Yet, Baudelaire had witnessed the era in which the Romantic imagination was confronted with mechanically produced images, and he was critical toward the production of sterile images and the vulgar preferences of the crowd. In that respect, his attitude is in line with critical theory and could be seen as iconoclastic. Still, ... he developed a dual attitude to images and a sophisticated media aesthetics. As he was concerned with the movements of images – creatively exploring their potential – it seems most accurate to describe his attitude as iconophilic. … Baudelaire was fully aware that he lived in a media-saturated environment, and he recognized the way newspapers, photographs, and optical devices change our perception. His writing reflects and observes the other media, such as the newspaper, photographs, the kaleidoscope, and the phenakistiscope. Having firsthand experience with the new media of his day, he was able to … use them productively in his writings. (166-67)

Grøtta's work considers Baudelaire's reaction to the boom in new visual technologies in the nineteenth century and demonstrates that the poet, obsessed with and sensitive to images as he was, was fully aware of how mass visuality would change people's perception of their world and, inevitably, art. Above all else, his art criticism shows his concern with the evolution of the image as a form of representation and as an artistic work. Now, this "movement of images" mentioned by Grøtta that echoes Molinat's previously quoted "mouvement des arts", is precisely the point of iconophilia "where attention is directed toward the *movement* of images, toward the ways they work and the ways in which they are transformed" (165). The iconophile is someone who not only has a taste and an eye for images but who is also able to carry out a reflection about them and be critical.

The *Salon* reviews show how Baudelaire, despite his claimed devotion to images, was able to take the necessary distance that typifies the true iconophilic attitude. Tracing the lineage between the different positions taken by the poet, Francis Molinat aptly sums

up their continuity while highlighting a characteristic of the Baudelairian thought – its *souplesse*, or the remarkable adaptability by which it can move about with fluidity between differing genres or periods:

> Le *Salon de 1846* reprend, corrige et enrichit celui de 1845. Ces deux *Salons* fondent une esthétique. Vers 1855, Baudelaire, déniant certains de ses critères, esquisse une nouvelle définition de l'art, complétée et épurée en 1859. Cette seconde esthétique ne détruit pas la première : elle l'intègre. La cohérence de la critique baudelairienne vient de cet *effort souple* et lucide de compréhension de ce que signifient les artistes par les formes qu'ils investissent[41]. (*Ecrits* 22, my emphasis)

Baudelaire began to appraise his contemporaries' artworks in *Salon de 1845*, which conventionally presents the considered arts according to the classical hierarchy of the period, starting with the elite forms of painting (history painting and portrait) to finish with sculpture. It already contains some of his central ideas about art, such as the necessity for the artist to take distance from nature and apply his faculty to recreate, and not merely imitate, it. The review that he wrote the next year stands as an intermediary between this *Salon* and the later *Salon de 1859*, which is the last piece that Baudelaire ever wrote about the Parisian event.

Moving away from the hierarchized catalogue model and introducing more philosophical considerations on art for which artists are now used as typical instances, *Salon de 1846* stands out for its unity and its analytical ambition. In this text, Baudelaire favors a thematic organization that fits his reflection on art over a description of the

[41] "The *1846 Salon* reuses, corrects and expands that of 1845. These two *Salons* found an aesthetics. Around 1855, Baudelaire, rejecting some of his own criteria, outlined a new definition of art that he completed and simplified in 1859. This second aesthetics does not destroy the first: it includes it rather. The coherence of Baudelairian criticism comes from this lucid and *adaptable* effort to understand what artists mean as they adopt certain forms."

actual content of the *Salon*. The poet-critic describes his personal approach, confesses his admiration for colorists in painting as opposed to draftsmen, claims his passion for Delacroix, puts forward the idea of an analogy between the arts, and, finally, revealing an interest in modernity that will be confirmed in the 1863 essay *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, he considers "les ressources particulières qu'offre le spectacle de leur siècle aux artistes contemporains[42]" (Castex 26). If he modifies his method to broaden his theoretical discourse, Baudelaire persists in his approach, sticking to his opinion that subjectivity is essential in art criticism: "pour être juste, la critique doit être partiale" ("to be fair, criticism must be biased" *OC* II: 418).

With his final *Salon de 1859*, Baudelaire definitively freed himself from the generic formal constraints of the traditional *Salon* review mentioned by Raser. Modernity and imagination are the central concepts of this text. Taking into account the latest developments in art, he adapts his discourse to better reflect on the nature of art and beauty. His conclusion is that imagination is at the origin of all artistic creation: without imagination, the eye can only perceive things in the most bland and therefore uninspiring way. This position leads him to criticize the school of Realism that was burgeoning in France with people like Champfleury or Duranty in literature and Courbet in painting. He condemns the principle of imitating nature faithfully so as to produce an accurate reproduction of reality, which, for him, is the antithesis of what art should be because such a goal utterly deprives imagination of its mediating role and the artist of his creative power. By praising imagination as the *sine qua none* condition for the existence of art,

[42] "The particular resources that the spectacle of their century offers to contemporary artists."

Baudelaire found the cornerstone of his aesthetic critical theory: "[il] possède [désormais] un critère précis pour juger les oeuvres d'art, à quelque genre qu'elles se rattachent … L'artiste a-t-il de l'imagination? Sait-il nous faire voir au-delà de l'objet qui est le prétexte de sa création[43]?" (Castex 65). With this criterion in mind, Baudelaire was looking for artists who would be able to render beauty as a relative manifestation of both the eternal and the present. His text *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* proves that he found at least one, Constantin Guys, and it will be an aim in this chapter to investigate whether he found others in photography.

In 1859, the poet-critic articulated the premises of a definition of modernity that was to fully blossom in his 1863 essay and that was directly derived from his conception of imagination. If modernity is the blending of the poetic with the historical, the contingent with the immutable, the durable with the transient, the modern painter must produce works that are singular in the sense that they express this ambivalent state of modernity as well as the heart and soul of the artist: "Un tel artiste n'est pas seulement l'oeil qui capte la réalité changeante du monde, car sa perception se double de ce qu'il ressent et pense et imagine[44]" (*Ecrits* 37). The eye, again, appears as the indispensable organ that empowers the imaginative process and that is the most apt to perceive the mutability of a perpetually mobile world. In this review, Baudelaire specifies the nature of the artistic vision by drawing an analogy between the artist and the child, stressing the unique quality of the artistic gaze which provides "une perception enfantine, c'est-à-dire

[43] "[He now] has a precise criterion to assess artworks, whatever the genre they belong to … Is the artist imaginative? Is he able to make us see beyond the object that is the pretext for his creation?"
[44] "Such an artist is not only the eye that captures the changing reality of the world because his perception is combined with what he feels and thinks and imagines."

une perception aiguë, magique à force d'ingénuité" because "l'enfant voit tout en nouveauté ... le génie n'est que l'enfance retrouvée à volonté[45]" (*OC* II: 690).

Almost twenty years after his first *Salon* review, Baudelaire had definitively taken distance from the conventional tenets of art criticism and embraced a demanding vision of art that he meant to apply to the pictorial arts as well as to his own poetic art, as noted by Molinat: "Baudelaire attend de [l'artiste] ce qu'il exige de lui-même, poète en prose: un regard d'enfant servi par les moyens éprouvés d'un véritable artiste[46]" (36). In other words, the poet and critic, sought the improbable and paradoxical creative synthesis of the innocent eye (the child's eye) and the experienced trained eye (the connoisseur's eye). The fascination for contraries and the endeavor to bring them together appears as a characteristic of the man who elected "Spleen et idéal" as a title for a section of his collection of poems. For him, it is certainly not a matter of reconciling them into a balanced synthesis but rather of contrasting them so as to draw attention onto the intrinsic ambivalence of the world. At the core of Baudelaire's oxymoronic aesthetics lies the idea that embracing something and its opposite is the unique posture to adopt to reflect the complexity and mobility of human life that constantly oscillates between irreconcilable ideals (high vs. low, innocence vs. experience, hope vs. depression, etc.). While several critics discussed the importance of analogy (Castex 64, Leakey 123) in Baudelaire's discourse, I would like to show that the oxymoron, in which paradox is embedded, works as a structuring principle in his aesthetic thought to the point of infusing the very

[45] "A childlike perception, that is, an acute perception, so ingenuous that it is magical," "a child sees everything as a novelty … genius is simply childhood recovered at will."
[46] "Baudelaire expects from [an artist] what he requires from himself as a prose poet, that is, a child's look complemented with the tested means of a true artist."

representations of his person. In this perspective, Baudelaire's writings on art shed a revealing light not only on his aesthetically singular portraits but also on his character. If Baudelaire's writings on art betray the remarkable flexibility ("effort souple") of his aesthetic theory, they also reflect its complexity that sometimes verges on paradox and so makes it "[un] fidèle reflet de l'homme, accord de contraires[47]" (*Ecrits* 38).

"Un homme accord de contraires"

As early as 1862, the writer Sainte-Beuve singularized Baudelaire for his marginal place in the world of mid-nineteenth-century French literature. In the following text, he metaphorically describes "la folie Baudelaire" or the outstanding exotic *locus* of Baudelaire on the far end of the literary scene:

> M. Baudelaire a trouvé le moyen de se bâtir, à l'extrémité d'une langue de terre réputée inhabitable et par-delà les confins du romantisme connu, un kiosque bizarre, fort orné, fort tourmenté, mais coquet et mystérieux ... Ce singulier kiosque, fait en marqueterie d'une originalité concertée et composite, qui attire les regards à la pointe extrême du Kamtchatka romantique, j'appelle cela « la folie Baudelaire ». L'auteur est content d'avoir quelque chose d'impossible, là où on ne croyait pas que personne pût aller[48]. (Bandy and Pichois 186-7)

Interestingly, the vocabulary used by Sainte-Beuve (*bizarre*, *orné*, *tourmenté*, *singulier*, *marqueterie*, *originalité*, *composite*, *impossible*) characterizes the poet in terms of particularity, complexity, and visuality, underscoring the sophisticated aesthetic aspect

[47] "A faithful reflection of the man, who was but a union of opposites."

[48] "M. Baudelaire has found a way to construct, at the extremities of a strip of land held to be uninhabitable and beyond the confines of known Romanticism, a bizarre pavilion, a folly, highly decorated, highly tormented, but graceful and mysterious, … This singular folly, with its marquetry inlays, of a planned and composite originality, which for some time has drawn the eye toward the extreme point of the Romantic Kamchatka, I call *Baudelaire's folly*. The author is content to have done something impossible, in a place where it was thought that no one could go." (translation in Calasso 260)

and the singular personality that appear to be inseparable from the man's persona. "*Tourmenté*", "*composite*" and "*impossible*" also insist on a state of mind that is all but unvarying in its thinking. It remains to be determined if the photographs showing Baudelaire are in accordance or at variance with such literary accounts of the man.

As proven by his oft-reconsidered art criticism, Baudelaire was a non-conformist, prone to changes of mind, who did not object to inconsistency and contradiction. Sincere and obstinate, he nonetheless had an oxymoronic turn of mind that shaped his vision of the world in a most dualistic way. As Carrier comments, quoting the poet in *Mon Cœur mis à nu*: "As a child, he felt 'deux sentiments contradictoires, l'horreur de la vie et l'extase de la vie' ['two contradictory feelings, the horror of life and the ecstasy of life']. They were not separate worlds but the world seen differently" (3). This perception strongly impacted his poetic imagination so that his poems are fraught with the tension existing between "*horreur*" and "*extase*", between a lofty aspiration to rise towards the light and the depressing feeling that one is condemned to remain, burdened with dissatisfaction and boredom, in the darkness of a hostile banal reality. Hypersensitive and particularly receptive to the power of images, Baudelaire was apparently even more sensitive to the duality, the ambivalence and the elusiveness of the world, hence his propensity to be himself dualistic and ambivalent at times, including in his attitude towards his greatest passion, images.

Although involuntarily so, the Arnauldet portrait (fig.2) is emblematic of this posture. Baudelaire's position in this picture is indeed most ambivalent as he stands in-between two spaces, one that is, so to speak, backstage, and therefore not meant to be

seen; and one that is, to carry on the metaphor, the stage where the act of representation, the making of the photographic shot, is supposed to take place. There is certainly some paradox in being in a photographer's studio and yet being hesitant about having one's picture taken. Baudelaire is here in the position of the reluctant sitter whose hesitancy stands in contrast with the readiness perceptible in Arnauldet's attitude. The liminal place occupied by the poet can be read as being symbolic of his own ambivalence towards photography. The part of him that is exposed signifies his fascination for images and the curiosity for new optical devices that entice him into prying into Arnauldet's portrait; whereas the part of him that withdraws to be out of the reach of the camera stands for his wariness towards the new medium and his refusal to take part in a pseudo-artistic act that was against many of his aesthetic opinions. All in all, this portrait is a *nolens volens* portrait which shares its ambivalent mood with at least one of the poems by Baudelaire that refer to photography. Revealingly dedicated to Nadar, "Le Rêve d'un curieux" (*OC* I: 128), whose title would also be appropriate for this picture if only for the dreamy blurry aspect of Baudelaire and his inquisitive position, has been interpreted by critics (Darragon, 868-9, Thélot 40-50, Grøtta 51) as a comment on photography and an account of a sitting session in the photographer's studio. I would contend, in turn, that even though the sonnet is explicitly addressed to Nadar, it is particularly evocative of the situation in the Arnauldet photograph.

The interpretive postulate is that the sentence "J'allais mourir" ("I was going to my death") in the first line means "J'allais chez le photographe" ("I was going to the photographer's studio"). Such interpretation draws on the association of photography

with the supernatural and the belief – held by Balzac for instance – that having one's picture implies losing one's soul. Also, the uncomfortable ritual imposed by the photographic portrait at that time, and especially the use of a specific chair to prevent the sitters from moving (fig.6) together with the necessity for them to keep their eyes open for a fairly long time, likens the sitting to torture and justifies the exaggerated image of death. In relation to Baudelaire's view on photography, Jérôme Thélot nonetheless suggests another justification.

fig.6. "Nouveau procédé pour obtenir des poses gracieuses" by Daumier

For him, the curious man in the poem is not merely a man who is inquisitive but also "l'amateur de curiosités, l'esthète qui pour se désennuyer cherche des objets rares, de précieuses images ou des images nouvelles[49]", that is to say, Baudelaire himself, the man who peeps in the Arnauldet portrait but also Baudelaire as a representative of the Poet as a cultural category: "il n'est pas interdit d'entendre le pronom « Je » ... comme synecdoque généralisante signifiant au-delà de la personne particulière le Type du

[49] "The curio lover, the aesthete who, trying to avoid boredom, looks fo rare objects, precious images or new images."

Poète[50]" (47). In this perspective, the poet who goes to the photographer's studio is a personification of poetry facing its new competitor in the art of representation. "*J'allais mourir* comme le grand art devant l'industrie" ("I was going to die like high art faced with industry"), Thélot sums up as he explains that the death of the poet in front of the camera symbolizes the damaging effect of photography on art (48). Baudelaire in the Arnauldet portrait embodies the poet who is about to meet his enemy, photography, which threatens his art, and is attracted to it while simultaneously recoiling from it. As formulated in the poem with the oxymoronic phrases "angoisse et vif espoir" ("anguish and bright hopes") and "désir mêlé d'horreur" ("desire mixed with horror"), the position of the poet is highly ambivalent and that is because curiosity and the expectation for something that would redeem the nefarious effect of the new medium undermine the determination of the poet to remain devoted to the art of poetry.

The two final tercets annihilate, however, this hope for something impressive : "J'étais comme un enfant avide du spectacle/ Haïssant le rideau comme on hait un obstacle/ Enfin la vérité froide se révéla:/ J'étais mort sans surprise/ – Eh quoi ! n'est-ce donc que cela? La toile était levée et j'attendais encore[51]." The Arnauldet/Baudelaire picture could depict the initial phase described in the first tercet – the hopeful wait when curiosity is at its heyday – so that this portrait of the poet could really represent him as the child eagerly expecting a mind-blasting spectacle. It visualizes the child metaphor and

[50] "It is not impossible to understand the pronoun « I » … as a generalizing synecdoche referring, in addition to a particular individual, to the type of the Poet."

[51] "I was like a child eager for the play / hating the curtain as one hates an obstacle / finally the cold truth revealed itself / I had died and was not surprised / What! Is that all there is to it? The curtain had risen and I was still waiting."

the multiple eye references that Baudelaire used in his writings on art and, as such, it encapsulates the complexity of Baudelaire's position on images and on photographic images in particular. By contrast, Baudelaire's verdict is more assertive and expeditious: expectations are deceived with photography and the curious man – or the aesthete – cannot be satisfied with it. The end of the poem insinuates that, for the art amateur and image worshipper that he is, the merits of photography are overrated: there is nothing extraordinary in photography and that is why it will never stupefy the child-like artist with eyes avid for intense visual experience. The comparison between Baudelaire's texts and his spur-of-the-moment portrait by Carjat reveals a position on images that is probably not as unambiguous as the texts only suggest: there is probably more to Baudelaire's relationship to images than sheer cult in one case (graphic arts) and sheer rejection in another (photography).

That is why the poet's reaction to the most essential change in visual culture that happened in his time, namely, the invention of photography, should now be examined in more detail. The case of photography is indeed where Baudelaire displays his propensity for paradox in the most conspicuous way. Unquestionably, he was a picture-obsessed art lover; he included allusions to the photographic technique in his poetry (as in "Rêve d'un curieux", "Mademoiselle Bistouri" and "Le Joueur généreux", Thélot 40-50, Grøtta 63-9); he had among his friends some photographers and had a dozen or so photographic portraits made of himself by Nadar, Carjat and Neyt; he consented to have a frontispiece engraved by Bracquemond after a photograph taken by Nadar for the second edition of his poems, so that "la photographie est, par ce biais, presque entrée dans *Les Fleurs du*

mal" ("photography, by means of this frontispiece, almost became part of *The Flowers of Evil*," Thélot 36); and, finally, he championed an art that would fully capture the nature of modernity by combining the present and the eternal. All these elements could lead one to think that no other mode of representation than photography could have satisfied the poet's quest for an adequate art of modernity and his personal taste for pictures and frames (Grøtta 54-7); however, coming to such conclusion would be neglecting Baudelaire's contrary mind and neglecting one of his most polemical essays.

Baudelaire on photography: an essay and a misconception

The section "Le Public moderne et la photographie[52]" in *Salon de 1859* is *the* text that has been read as undeniable proof of Baudelaire's hostility towards photography. It has been variously interpreted as a manifestation of the poet's reactionary aesthetic stance (Grøtta 48) or of his misunderstanding of the new technique (*AB* 7: 35) – two reactions that contradict his championing of modernity and his perceptive account of emerging forms of visuality elsewhere in his writings. All things considered, "Le Public moderne" is a very short text and references on photography in the rest of Baudelaire's *oeuvre* are scarce so that "the myth that he simply rejected the new media is based on very little evidence ... Baudelaire was fascinated with everything that was new, and we may suspect that his attitude toward the new media is more complex than it may seem" (Grøtta 6). The key to understand this additional idiosyncrasy in the poet's attitude to images is to

[52] Abbreviated as "Le public moderne" in what follows.

reconsider his discourse on photography in relation to his position as an iconophile with an eye trained and experienced in appraising more traditional pictorial art.

As with most of *Salon de 1859*, it rapidly appears that Baudelaire in this text does not review the annual Paris exhibition where photography had for the first been given a place but rather expresses a theoretical judgment on a new medium. It should be no surprise then that no photographer or no specific work is mentioned: Baudelaire is not concerned with the particular products of a few individuals but, as usual, with the generic movement of the arts and how the appearance of an unprecedented way of representing the world in pictures is affecting the course of cultural history. As mentioned earlier, Baudelaire regarded painting as superior to all other arts and, in so doing, he abided by the classical principle that there is a hierarchy between the arts and that such ordering should foster comparisons between the respective merits of each art. As a consequence, Baudelaire could not but judge the contemporary developments in the visual arts relative to painting. More than staunch conservatism, the poet's attitude may have been the result of the confrontation of two models, or two ways of seeing. "It is crucial to understand that Baudelaire's point of departure for *Salon de 1859* was the art of painting ..., that he had learned to *see* through the study of paintings, and that his passion for paintings was formative in regard to his preferences within visual aesthetics" (Grøtta 48) – including photographic aesthetics as I shall seek to demonstrate later. Part of Baudelaire's dissatisfaction with photography may have come from the frustration of looking for effects comparable to those created in painting in photographs and not finding them. What was an asset in art criticism – "the capacity to see the arts in relation to one

another" (Grøtta 51) – may have proved here to impede the full appraisal of the possibilities of photography. As though the memory of paintings were too strong and the training of his eye too deeply anchored in his critical mind, the poet-iconophile appears to have been unable to apply to photography the same meticulous and perceptive method as with visual arts. Destabilized by the advent of a new visual medium that threatened his conception of what an artistic visual representation should be, Baudelaire seems to have first retreated within his subjectivity and the comfortable reassuring site ("*la folie*") of what he knew best, that is, the art of hand-crafted pictures.

Being an essay on photography, "Le Public moderne" has an unconventional beginning. The first paragraphs are all about painting and the nonsensical titles given by painters to their works. If, from the start, Baudelaire brings forward painting to reflect on photography, it is certainly to better highlight what has become a connection between the two media: the excessive emphasis on progress, a deplorable symptom of which is the insistence on amazing people with dubious and un-artistic stratagems. Amazing people, or placing them in a state of intriguing perplexity, by presenting them with puzzling titles or "unimaginative" realistic photographs (Raser 134), has, according to him, become a way of impressing the masses *à peu de frais* ("at little cost") and, so to speak, industrially, "par des moyens étrangers à l'art" ("with means unknown to art") (*OC* II: 616) that debase the artist and the very act of creation. Thélot's analysis of the opening passage of "Le Public moderne" underscores the semiotic and artistic implications for photography:

> Cette diatribe apparemment hors sujet ... a en vérité avec la question de la photographie un lien aussi fort que subtil, puisque ce que Baudelaire dénonce ... c'est la « domination progressive de la matière » : à savoir, dans le cas de la photographie, le primat accordé à l'« industrie » et la *relégation consécutive de l'esprit créatif* ... La photographie, c'est un peu la même chose que ces « inutiles rébus » intitulant des tableaux inintelligibles : c'est un *procédé qui ne montre que lui-même*, un *stratagème sans infini ni intériorité*, une fabrication si dépourvue de sens, si *privée de viser au-delà de son signe aucune transcendance* qu'elle est analogue à ces « logogriphes » vidés d'esprit[53]. (46, my emphasis)

In a nutshell, what Baudelaire deplores with photography is the numbing of human imagination and the simplification of the signifying process. In a photograph, what you get is what you see as the mechanical reproduction allows the exact reproduction of what the eye of the photographer perceived, and that is definitely against what Baudelaire expects from any artistic technique. As commented by Raser, it is a sacrilege to the Baudelairian cult of images as mediated representations: "photography is idolatrous because it conflates signifier and signified ...; it takes the place of its objects" (136). There lies one of the problematic features of photography for the poet: photography does not represent, it replaces. There is no added value, no extra touch of the soul (*supplément d'âme*) in a photograph; and that is why he regarded it as a "sterile technology with no future in the fine arts" (Grøtta 47). We have already seen how, for him, the world had to be treated by the artist as a dictionary, a repertoire of signs to be reinterpreted in an artistic way so that they could signify more than their rudimentary meaning and aim

[53] "This diatribe that is apparently irrelevant ... actually has a strong and subtle link with the question of photography since what Baudelaire denounces ... is the « progressive domination of matter » : namely, in photography, le primary importance given to « industry » and the *subsequent relegation of the creative mind* ... Photography is almost the same thing as these « useless puzzles » which are the titles of unintelligible paintings : it is a *process that shows nothing but itself*, a *stratagem with no infinity nor interiority*, a fabrication that is so meaningless, so *deprived of any intention of aiming at any transcendence beyond its own sign* that it is analogous to these « enigmas » that have no substance."

beyond at some form of transcendence, as Thélot puts it. Now, for Baudelaire, this transcendence can only be made possible with the intervention of the artist's imagination. It is hardly surprising then that *Salon de 1859* should be hostile to photography for "Baudelaire presents [it] as a search for imagination" (Raser 140) that is only met with the disappointing discovery of the invasion of progress and industry.

"Le Public moderne" can be read as a preamble to the next section of the *Salon*, "La Reine des facultés", in which Baudelaire praises what is for him the most important human faculty, that is, imagination. In these two texts, the poet-critic articulates a conception of artistic creation that sheds light on the supposed antipathy that he expressed against photography as well as on his paradoxical attitude to the photographic portrait and what he sought in it, aesthetically speaking. In *Salon de 1859* Baudelaire reiterates a belief that he had expressed in the past and that was a frequent opinion in art criticism in his time[54]: "Imagination relates, it does not repeat; it arranges disordered nature. Imagination is thus like grammar: ordering elements nature provides, it produces a signifying totality" (Raser 146). In other words, imagination is a mediating agent, and even the supreme artistic agent mediating between the world and the artist, between a perception and an artistic work. Considering that "to produce art, one must go beyond representation" (Raser 23), the imagination of the artist should perform a transfiguration of reality, establishing links notably between sensations, feelings or ideas so as to highlight the existence of an indefinite circulation between the various planes of universal life (Castex 64-5). In this perspective, art, and especially visual art, is more than mere

[54] See Molinat's introduction in Charles Baudelaire *Ecrits sur l'art*, p.23.

mimesis; it is nature reflected by an artist with a unique sensitivity, a remodeling of the data of reality by an individual's subjectivity (*Ecrits* 23). As such, artworks should express the artist's soul, passions and temperament. Expressivity and beauty therefore should be the lifeblood of art – and the criteria by which art should be judged.

Because the photographer represents what he sees through the setting off of a mechanical process and does not recreate what he feels through the transfiguring performance of an artistic gesture, he cannot, Baudelaire purports, claim an artistic status. For him, imagination, and the mediating intervention of the human mind, are absent in photography. He warns therefore that "photography may paralyze the imagination of the beholder" and of the artist so that "if photography was allowed to enter the domain of art, art would soon be corrupted" (Grøtta 47-9). Like the silly titles mocked at the beginning of "Le Public moderne", photography, because it is not mediated by an artist's imagination, is equally unable to fully satisfy the imagination of the beholder. Photography can amaze but without leading one to wonder – and that is a major reproach (and one poeticized in "Le Rêve d'un curieux"). What Baudelaire formulates in *Salon de 1859* is the apprehension of a poet-iconophile that photography could supersede painting and the graphic arts as the main source of images and so, mute the imaginative abilities of the human kind. What he dreads is nothing but the disappearance of a hierarchized art world with which he is familiar and in accordance.

For Baudelaire, the photographic man is the man of progress – the man who has an exclusive taste for truth (*OC* I: 616) but no inclination for beauty and wonder. In his condemnation of photography, he consequently aligns the new medium with the realist

aesthetic that flourishes in this period. Contending that "imagination adds where realism only repeats" (Raser 137), he attacks realist painting as a similarly unimaginative art. As he appraises again one art in relation to the other, he reveals his antipathy not so much towards photography as a medium but towards realism as a mode of perception and subsequent representation. He opposes the exact reproduction of nature to the imaginatively mediated reproduction of nature, implying that what is crucial may be not so much the medium used but the use of the medium. The realist aesthetics then would be as equally detestable in painting as it is in photography for every art that promotes the positivist copying of nature without the active intervention of imagination would inhibit dream and wonder. In his denunciation of the imminent ruin of art, Baudelaire elects the daguerreotype as the representative of the "new image" (Thélot 43) only devoted to the true and faithful rendition of reality and compares Daguerre to a destructive messiah and his admirers to primitive sun worshippers (*OC* I: 617).

Invented in 1839, the daguerreotype was indeed very popular when Baudelaire was writing his *Salon*. Relying on the impression of images on silver plates by the sunlight, it was chiefly regarded as "a technology allowing the reproduction of images" (Grøtta 8), a technical prodigy in the wake of many preceding optical devices, such as the panorama or the stereoscope. The daguerreotype allowed the production of an exact copy of a portion of reality, forever captured and imprinted on a plate; however, its particularity was that it did not permit reproduction. Only one copy of the image could be produced and for this reason the daguerreotype has often been perceived as a historical transition between painting and photography (Thélot 11). It is somewhat curious then that Baudelaire should

have chosen this specific instance of photography, when others already existed that allowed endless reproduction and when he himself never had his portrait immortalized by this technique but always by techniques allowing multiple reproductions and so a greater industrialization of the image-making process[55]. Similarly, Baudelaire, writing in 1859, says nothing of the *carte-de-visite* portrait technique patented by André Disdéri in 1853, although it truly accelerated the circulation of photographic images and the mass-production of infinitely reproducible images, making the full financial exploitation of the medium possible (Yacavone 62). Whereas early photographic images, and even daguerreotypes, were expensive and "not infrequently kept in a case like jewelry" (Benjamin, *Work* 276), *carte-de-visite* portraits were constituted of "12 images captured on a single plate, reducing the price to one-fifth of a regular portrait" (Yacavone 46).

[55] Since a wealth of critical material exist on the connections between Benjamin and Baudelaire issue, I will not delve very far into the subject but I would like to make a remark on the question of reproducibility and industrial production which is allegedly at the core of Baudelaire's polemical essay on photography. As suggested by Marit Grøtta, it is necessary to keep mind that "today's understanding of Baudelaire's attitude [was] influenced by [Walter] Benjamin's perspectives on photography [and his] reflections on photography as an act of mechanical reproducibility ... anticipated by Baudelaire" (52), despite the fact that "Benjamin's progressive views on the new media are hardly perceivable in his writing on Baudelaire" (11). To be precise, Baudelaire in his *Salon de 1859* criticizes the exact reproduction of nature permitted by photography but says little on the reproducibility of the photographic image itself (words like "copie" or "exemplaire" for instance are never mentioned). It is rather Walter Benjamin who, outlining a theory of perception that took its roots in the media mutations taking place in the mid-nineteenth century and therefore contemporaneous with Baudelaire's life, put forward the ideas of endless mechanical repetition and industrial production as menaces for art. Also, when Benjamin has no objection to considering photography an art, "Baudelaire does not [even] argue that photography is art – which was not a given by any means in the mid-19th century but a position that had to be discursively argued and constructed – but that art is becoming photographic, a change he clearly opposes" (Emerling 20). It is clearly on the issues of singularity and authenticity that the two men's discourses diverge. For the poet, these are associated with art and painting only whereas, for Benjamin, singularity and authenticity are still present in the first stage of the history of photography – the very moment negatively considered by Baudelaire – as it is only the growing industrialization and commercialization of photography that caused an artistic decline and the shriveling of the "auratic quality of early photographs [that he sees as] related to their particular aesthetic value, with images produced from the 1840s to the 1870s being regarded as constituting a forty-year "golden age" of photography as an art and craft" (Yacavone 45).

Such development of a photographic economy certainly only confirmed Baudelaire's skepticism towards photography and definitively put the new medium beyond the pale.

As he focuses on the daguerreotype, the poet-iconophile conflates again a photographic technique and its object with a painterly aesthetics, judging one relative to the other because he sees there a common endangering of an artistic mode of vision. His silence on the actual growing industrialization of the photographic image suggests that he was primarily interested in interrogating the effects of mechanization on the reception of images by the French society of the time, rather than in giving an argued demonstration of the technical and artistic flaws of photography. In the end, Baudelaire reproaches photography with being "un procédé sans imagination et sans génie" ("a process without imagination or genius" Thélot 43), purely objective and mimetic, which has no artistic potential. He therefore condemns its possible assimilation with art and recommends that the technology should be confined to being "an archival instrument, a prosthetic memory for instrumental use in many areas" (Emerling 21). He does not worry so much about the capacity newly acquired by photography of greater reproducibility as about the blind enthusiasm aroused in the credulous public by photographs. What he vilifies above all is the delusory attitude of a people who mistakes imitative reproduction and realism for beauty (*OC* II: 619): they too have avid eyes but, unlike him, they do not have the training that could enable them to be fully appreciative of photography's merits. They cannot see therefore that the realism of the photographic is all vulgarity and obscenity.

A stern critic of bourgeois materialism, Baudelaire has only disdain for the modern public's narcissistic desire to contemplate their own images (Grøtta 67) and their

devaluation of images as a mere object of desire for the unenlightened masses who want to be easily amazed. More than a condemnation of the photographic medium, "Le Public moderne" is a critical response to the emergence of mass-media culture on the part of an iconophile whose ideals were not reality and veracity but beauty and imagination and whose familiarity with the various image-making techniques gave him theoretical and aesthetic tools to appreciate the cultural impact of such a change. Admittedly, Baudelaire underestimated the artistic potentialities of photography. It must however be said in his defense that, in his time, the idea that photography was a form of art was by no means a "given" but a much argued position, to paraphrase Jae Emerling. Photography was still in its childhood and, if technique and results improved significantly between 1839 – date of the official birth of photography – and Baudelaire's death in the 1860s, it was only later that photography was allowed a place in the artistic sphere. Unlike what frequent misinterpretations of the poet's short essay suggest, Baudelaire did not misread the initial episode of the history of photography because he was simply obsessed with a conservative view of art and unfamiliar with the medium: on the contrary, there is evidence that Baudelaire knew very well how the medium worked and that he even appreciated it – at least, when its products fitted with his aesthetic credo. This acknowledgement of Baudelaire's interest in photography and of his attempt to integrate it into his conception of visual art is essential to understand how a man who had allegedly so much antipathy for photography may have consented to have his picture taken more than fifteen times.

The end of a myth: "En photographie, Baudelaire s'y connaît[56]"

Even though Baudelaire was no user of photography himself, he was definitely familiar with the medium and with the studios in Paris. The first reason is that he had photographers among his friends and acquaintances, the most famous of them being Gaspard-Félix Tournachon, a.k.a. Nadar. A photographer, but also a caricaturist, a writer, a passionate aeronaut and a merchant of images, Nadar had, in appearance, little in common with a poet who had no liking for science, industrialization and commerce. That Baudelaire could have maintained such an unorthodox friendship is perhaps yet another sign of his paradoxical nature, or of the adaptability of his critical mind. In any case, one consequence was that when Baudelaire wrote his *Salon de 1859*, he had already had the experience of going "to die" in a photographer's studio. As Claude Pichois noted in *Documents iconographiques* (38), it is not always easy to date Baudelaire's photographic portraits with precision. A minimum of two pictures have however been identified as dating from before 1859 (fig.7 and 8). Taken by Nadar, they prove that Baudelaire, before rebuffing photography in his 1859 writing, had consented to participate, even if willy-nilly and temporarily, in the cult of the new visual idol. On these pictures, Baudelaire may appear indifferent or sullen but his very willingness to pose for Nadar suggests a desire to see for himself the new image-making method. Was it to please Nadar? To satisfy his personal curiosity or the same narcissism that he later lambasted in the modern bourgeois audience (this would only be one more contradiction in the man)? – no matter what reason drove the poet to pose for the photographer, these portraits are

[56] "Baudelaire actually knows a lot about photography" (Thélot 36).

tangible proof that his supposed antipathy was not so much geared towards the medium as towards a bad appropriation of it.

fig. 7. Portrait with hidden hand (Nadar)

fig.8. Portrait in an armchair (Nadar)

Even more revealing is the fact that his participation in the photographic craze of his time did not stop after his condemnation of the medium in 1859. Against all expectations, most surviving photographs of the poet date from the 1860s and they are not only the work of Nadar but of Etienne Carjat and Charles Neyt as well. Far from forever condemning photography, it turns out that Baudelaire had a lasting inclination to visit photographers' studios and that he may have been willing to give a chance to the new medium in the end.

For a long time, photography, because of the painstaking meticulousness of the technique and because of the cost of printing photographs, was absent from books – one famous exception being William Henry Fox Talbot's experimental 1844 *The Pencil of Nature* in which he inserted his own calotypes. It was not until the late 1860s when it

became possible to reproduce images on a large scale that photography was introduced as book illustration and it was not until the end of the century that the invention of photographic printing processes like photogravure (1879) or photolithography (1885) reduced the cost of production and made photographic illustration viable. Although Baudelaire loved images and wrote about caricaturists who were also renowned illustrators (like George Cruikshank), he seems never to have considered book illustration as a way to bring the visual to his poetry – until the decision was taken to publish a second edition of *Les Fleurs du mal*.

The project, however, did not progress as planned by Baudelaire and photography eventually came to his rescue. He wanted a frontispiece for this edition and he had in mind a specific image, a tree-skeleton in the style of Gothic engraving, that illustrator Félix Bracquemond was in charge of designing but the latter failed in the task and it was a very different frontispiece that decorated the 1861 edition of *Les Fleurs du mal*. Still designed by Bracquemond although not an original creation, the image was instead a portrait of the poet engraved by him after a photograph taken by Nadar in 1860 (fig.9). This resort to photography does not mean that Baudelaire was suddenly ready – two years after "Le public moderne" – to innovatively introduce photography as a legitimate visual counterpart to his own poetry, but it was the sign of a "compromise" on his part (Thélot 36). It was still an engraving, an image reworked by Bracquemond's mind and hand, but its source was a photograph: that Baudelaire had allowed its use implies that he found something worthy of interest in Nadar's original.

fig.9. Bracquemond's frontispiece for *Les Fleurs du mal*

Photography's "near entrance" ("presque entrée", Thélot 36) in his poetry can be interpreted as another gesture of willingness, and all the more so when considering the symbolic meaning of the frontispiece. It is the first picture that the reader sees in a book and when it represents the author, it is comparable to an introduction ritual whose social function is not so distinct from that of the popular *carte-de-visite* as it is the image by which the author introduces himself to his readership. Its function is "to connect author and text" (Williams 45) as it represents the author, materializing his authorship and his authority on the text. A paratextual ornamentation reducing the distance between author and reader, the portrait-frontispiece signifies the presence of the author in his book more corporeally than the linguistic marker that the writing of his name is. By allowing Bracquemond to copy Nadar's image Baudelaire somehow reconciled his aesthetic beliefs and his frustrated interest in photography by attempting the apparently paradoxical reunion of the mimetically exact mechanical photograph and the mediated hand-made engraving.

Betrayed by these images that he so fervently loved, Baudelaire is also betrayed by his own writings. His Dec. 23, 1865 letter to his mother, written from Belgium, has thus been interpreted as evidencing "the Baudelairian consent to photography" (Thélot 36):

> Je voudrais bien avoir ton portrait … Il y a un *excellent* photographe au Havre. Mais je crains bien que cela ne soit pas possible maintenant. Il faudrait *que je fusse présent*. *Tu ne t'y connais pas*, et tous les photographes, même excellents, ont des manies ridicules ; ils prennent pour une bonne image une image où toutes les verrues, toutes les rides, tous les défauts, toutes les trivialités du visage sont rendus très visibles, très exagérés .... Il n'y a guère qu'à Paris qu'on sache faire ce que je désire, c'est-à-dire un portrait exact, mais ayant le *flou* d'un dessin. Enfin, nous y penserons, n'est-ce pas[57]? (*Correspondances* II, 554)

This letter stands in striking contrast with the poet's 1859 essay while simultaneously confirming that his apparent hostility towards photography has been misread. This passage suggests that he truly had a photographic sensibility (Grøtta 60): not only does he display some familiarity with the world of photography but he also expresses an expert's point of view on the aesthetic achievements of photographers. More than pointing to the familiar ambivalence of Baudelaire, this letter is the best evidence of his perceptiveness when it comes to photography. This fragment will prove particularly precious for us later when analyzing the aesthetic style of Baudelaire's photographic portraits.

"Part of Baudelaire's genius was that he did not fall prey to the new media emerging in the era of high capitalism; he … played with them as sources of new

[57] "I would very much like to have your portrait … There's an *excellent* photographer in Le Havre. I'm afraid however that it won't be possible now. I'd have to *be present*. *You do not know enough about photography* and all photographers, even those who are excellent, have ridiculous odd habits; they think a good image is an image where all warts, all wrinkles, all defects, all the trivialities of a face are made very visible, are very exaggerated … Only in Paris do they know how to make what I want, that is, a portrait that is precise but has the *fuzzy* quality of a drawing. Well, we'll think about it, won't we?"

experiences": Grøtta's conclusion (6) echoes Raser's remark that "Baudelaire [quickly] understood the rhetoric of photography" (134). Judging from the visual and verbal proofs previously met, he also understood its powers and aesthetic possibilities. Unlike the modern public, Baudelaire the iconophile was not impressed by photography (*OC* II: 616). He was not mesmerized by the emerging "techno-utopianism" (Grøtta 11) and the illusions it created; he was at best intrigued. He was however sufficiently familiar with the medium to judge that the power granted to photography was overestimated and flawed – and, ironically, his blurry anti-portrait in the Arnauldet photograph confirms that he was, to some extent, right. It is for this reason and because *he* valued imagination and artistic creativity above all else that, instead of banishing photography, he tried to find in it what others did not want. If he repeatedly consented to have his picture taken, it is probably because he was in search of photographers who would be able to satisfy his yearning for dream and wonder. He wanted to see a painter's temperament in his paintings; he similarly longed for photographers who would be able to show theirs in their pictures. It will have to be determined then whether his photographs reflect and satisfy this request. Nevertheless, it is also necessary to consider Baudelaire in relation to his time and to the society he lived in for, only then, the singularity of his position can fully appear. In this respect, it is undeniable that he was aware that the advent of the new medium would mark an irreversible change in visual culture and that it was representative of a larger crisis in culture that affected not only visual arts but literature, not only painters and photographers but writers.

"LE MONDE VA FINIR": CONFRONTING A MEDIA CRISIS

Twenty years of photography – and still an indefinite status [58]

When Charles Baudelaire wrote "Le public moderne" in 1859, photography had been extant for exactly twenty years. Its official birth came with the presentations by physicist François Arago of the achievements of Nicéphore Niépce and Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre who had designed the first photographic process that made possible the recording of a permanent image using light-sensitive compounds at the French Academy of Sciences and at the Chamber of Deputies in, respectively, January and July 1839. It is known nowadays that "the advent of photography took the form of a Franco-English rivalry" (Brunet 14): the first public disclosure of the "daguerreotype" in Paris was thus concomitant with W. H. Fox Talbot's announcement in England that he had designed an alternative process called the "calotype". Unlike the daguerreotype which was a one-time direct positive process forming an invisible latent image that had to be chemically developed and fixed on a silver plate, the calotype allowed multiple duplications on paper but relied on the production of a preliminary negative image. Where the calotype had brownish tones and hazy contours and details that were evocative of engraving, the daguerreotype was remarkable for its delicacy and its sharpness so much so that although "the calotype had much importance for the future development of photography, the daguerreotype produced far more beautiful, and technically perfect, images and was the dominant method for the first fifteen years of the medium" (Sandler 8-10).

[58] "The end of the world is near" (*OC* I: 665).

Between the official introduction of the two methods and the publication of Baudelaire's *Salon de 1859*, several developments affecting the medium's chemical compounds, optical lenses, exposure time, duplication materials and even commercialization had established photography in quite another sphere than mere scientific experiment. Notably, the decrease in exposure time from twenty minutes to thirty seconds in full sunlight by the mid-1840s and the invention, in 1851, of the collodion process which allowed the creation of cheaper techniques like the tintype that allied the visual quality of the daguerreotype and the easy reproducibility of the calotype (and so led to the almost complete disappearance of both of them) were crucial factors in the popularization of photography and its development as a business. These successive improvements are important because they show that the first phase of the history of photography was as much a quest for improved practicality and reproducibility as the pursuit of visual effects that could bring unique aesthetic experiences: sharp clarity with the daguerreotype, simultaneous contemplation of strictly identical pictures with the *carte-de-visite* patented by Disdéri in 1853, or pre-cinematic illusion of depth with the three-dimensional images created by the very popular stereoscope, a.k.a. "the television of its day" (Sandler 16). Undoubtedly, the invention of photography and its subsequent transformations contributed to "the shaping of a new visual culture in which the manipulation of senses was paramount … [and which] offered new ways of seeing and … a new field of vision" (Grøtta 80). The works by Marit Grøtta, on the literary recuperation of new visual technologies, and Françoise Meltzer, on the stereoscopic double vision, have established that this visual environment strongly influenced

Baudelaire's poetry. If photography and other contemporaneous optical experiments opened new possibilities in art, the first discourses related to the beginnings of photography were not so much interested in exploring these possibilities as in probing photography's nature and ascribing it a cultural status based on its origin.

The invention of photography meant the sudden introduction in the realm of human possibilities of the unprecedented and almost divine capacity of reproducing perfect mimetic pictures of the visible world. Causing an immediate sensation, photography, "was said to be a wonder, a freak of nature, a new art, a threshold science, and a dynamic instrument of democracy" (Marien 1). Its appearance in a visual environment dominated by hand-crafted visual arts was thus bound to disturb the long-established categorization of human activities and its nature-art-industry paradigm. It appears to have been a difficult phenomenon to conceptualize for an age that was otherwise keen on labelling, classifying and ordering (Armstrong, Diaz). One first unsettling factor was the lack of clarity in photography's lineage, which, in turn, made it difficult to define it categorically:

> Photography has no single, clear, antecedent ... If photography is defined principally as a means of making multiple copies, then its precursors can be sought among print media such as woodcut and engraving. But if photography is defined as a means of copying observable reality exactly; then its antecedents are likely to be located in a wide range of visual – and even verbal – encodings of optical experience. When replication and exactitude are compounded in the definition, pursuit of photography's precursors can lead to the realm of magic and illusion. (Marien 1)

So, how then was photography conceived by those who witnessed its invention? For early viewers of photographic images, the medium was "more like some marvel of a fairy tale

or delusion of necromancy than a practical reality" – an impression due to the technical specificity of the daguerreotype whose latent intermediary image was like a magical apparition on the negative (Marien 9). The terms used by those who had fathered photography were of a different sort and yet they too reflect how its unstable status destabilized existing notions of origination and authorship.

Eager to present the daguerreotype as part of a process by which a technology of visual reproduction had been gradually formed, Arago's reports inscribed photography in the course of human history by presenting it as a human invention. Concurrently, the actual pioneers of photography stressed the natural origin of the photographic phenomenon: Talbot, Daguerre and Niépce – "each insisted that photography originated in nature," with Talbot asserting that the photographic image "was impressed by Nature's hand" and Niépce that his accomplishment relied on "spontaneous reproduction by the action of light"" (Marien 3). As highlighted by Marien, "beginning with the earliest verbal accounts of the medium, photography was described in different terms than the machines, instruments and processes of the Industrial Revolution" and the persistent interchangeable use of "invention" and "discovery" is a linguistic trace of the coexistence of discourses of natural genesis and technological genesis and of the concepts that clustered around them: nature/human, nature/science, truth/deception, present/past (9 & 29). Whether natural or artificially devised by man, a product of technological innovation or "the outcome of gradual societal development" (Marien 1) in a time of "intense desire for visual mastery" (Armstrong 17), photography symbolized the radical transformations brought about by modernity that questioned established ideas. The interrogation of

whether photographs were artistic images became then a heated debate that crystallized most of the uncertainties, anxieties, and tensions surrounding the ongoing sociocultural changes. If, Marien concedes, "the debate about photography, art and society was earnestly felt and genuine in its arguments, the exchange about photography's place and influence on art was [at the same time] a surrogate for larger social topics, such as social mobility, democratization, the consequences of industrialization, and the relation of capitalist societies to their past" (84).

Between art and industry, artwork and document, tradition and innovation, photography had in Baudelaire's time no definite status except that of a disruptive force. Its advent was therefore declared a pivotal moment, "une césure majeure pour l'histoire contemporaine" (Brunet 5), "l'événement moderne par excellence du déploiement de la technique malmenant la tradition de l'art[59]" (Thélot 33). While Marien identifies early photographic history as a modernist myth, "a protagonist in durable mythic narratives of the modern experience" (47), Philippe Ortel argues that the very technical difference between the daguerreotype and the calotype marks a transition to modernity:

> Si le daguerréotype, image unique sur métal, tient encore de l'âge culturel antérieur (souvent encadré comme un tableau, il possède l'*aura* que Walter Benjamin attribue aux images uniques), le calotype, reproductible, … s'affirme définitivement comme médium, moyennant quoi le territoire de la photographie est beaucoup plus large que celui des images traditionnelles … En enveloppant les productions retreintes de l'art d'une masse infinie d'épreuves, cette invention atteint à la fois les œuvres et leur contexte d'énonciation[60]. (11)

[59] "A major break for contemporary history", "the modern event par excellence by which the expansion of technique persecutes artistic tradition."

[60] "If the daguerreotype, a unique image on metal, still partakes of an anterior cultural age (framed like a painting as it often is, it has the *aura* that Walter Benjamin attributes to unique images), the calotype, which is reproducible, … definitively asserts itself as a medium, which implies that the territory of photography is much bigger than that of traditional images … By surrounding the restricted productions of art with an

Thélot formulates almost a similar opinion when he describes the daguerreotype as a composite, transitory symbol, between painting and photography, as well as between art and industry, which encapsulates the past and the future of visual representation (86). Because it evolved rapidly and thoroughly saturated the cultural scene by the 1860s (Armstrong 12), photography came to represent the intrusion of progress in all spheres of human life and the diffusion of a new visual order. As Jae Emerling explains, the diverging reception of the new medium reflected more largely a moment of crisis in Western societies as they transitioned from a traditional social structure to modernity. In this perspective, Baudelaire's own ambivalent response to photography in *Salon de 1859* can be interpreted as a response to the confusing change that was taking place:

> Baudelaire's distinction between art and industry ... is symptomatic of the historical and cultural discourse surrounding photography in the mid-nineteenth century ... [and] of how photography comes to be understood … as a troubling event delimiting the very parameters of modernism itself. ... The discourse generated by photography – as technology, as entertainment, as commodity, as social investment, as politics, and as art – revealed deep tensions within the hierarchical structures of bourgeois society, and raised questions, both epistemological and ideological, as to how the world should be viewed and comprehended. (21)

Photography, as "the triumph of the technology that fulfilled the wish for unmediated mediation" (Armstrong 14), was thus bound to have an impact on the other more traditional modes of recording reality that had so far dominated Western art; indeed, literature and painting – the very arts that were most meaningful to Baudelaire – were

---

infinite number of photographic prints, this invention similarly affects the works and their context of enunciation."

immediately and deeply affected by what Victor Hugo called "the photographic revolution" (Ortel 7) and the possibilities it brought to the world.

Photography and the sister arts: disrupting signifying systems

Unarguably, the invention of photography caused a stir in artistic spheres. It rapidly acquired many enthusiastic advocates and just as many detractors. Baudelaire, of course, has been a famous figurehead for the second category, but writers like Théodore de Banville or Alexandre Dumas fils also deplored the dehumanized, flat objectivity of the new image. Although numerous painters gave up the paintbrush to open photographic studios in the middle of the nineteenth century, the reaction in pictorial arts was by no means less outraged. At best, photography was hailed as a convenient aid for painters who could now work using photos instead of sketches or from life; but, more generally, it was rebuffed as a mechanical procedure whose automatism was an insult to artistic creation and to the artist's genius. Behind denigration and disapproval, there lay the anxiety that photography would simply supersede painting, as exemplified by painter Paul Delaroche's claim when seeing a daguerreotype for the first time: "from today, painting is dead!" (Emerling 87) Another fear was that photography would dictate painting's future developments; and, indeed, not much time elapsed before painting was "infected" by a photographic aesthetics of sorts, as noted by Michael Moriarty: "Like lithography, the photograph affected the technique of painting itself … And the experience of the photograph actually shaped the kinds of images painters produced,"

that is, “paintings that aimed at photographic accuracy” or “that adopted new compositional techniques like off-centre arrangements” (Collier & Lethbridge 17).

While the possibility that photography could have an influence on painting was rapidly acknowledged, the possibility that it could influence literature was not, even though some perceptive minds such as Francis Wey contemplated it as early as 1851: “la poésie, la littérature même, ces sources vives de l’inspiration pour l’artiste, sont atteintes à leur tour par cette iconographie nouvelle [de la photographie][61]” (Ortel 7). Nowadays, many studies exist that investigate the relation between photography and literary realism (Armstrong) or between photography and nineteenth-century literature at large (Ortel, Thélot, Piret, Hamon). It is not my point here to explore such a vast question, nevertheless, it is to be stressed that most of these works examine how photography as the vehicle of a new way of looking at the world came to infiltrate the literary text of the second half of the nineteenth century. They delineate a “photographic model” (Ortel 20): the subtle presence of the photographic universe through punctual references, subtextual structures, technical procedures or thematic motifs (for instance, framing techniques or the staging of the canonical scene of the artist at work) with the photographic box, etc.). Being not concerned with the manifestation of photography in literature but rather with how early photography “looked at” literature through the portraits of a writer like Baudelaire, I will not delve any further into the literary photographic model but will instead consider now how the eruption of photography may have disrupted another

[61]“Poetry, literature even, the very lifeblood of the artist’s inspiration are, in turn, affected by the new [photographic] iconography.”

model, that of the traditional configuration of verbal and visual arts into rivaling categories and how it is possible to relate this to Baudelaire's response to photography.

The widespread cross-fertilization of painting and literature by photography-inspired realist aesthetics was actually symptomatic of a context of close relationships between the arts, which, according to Michel Foucault in "La Peinture photogénique", knew its heyday in the 1860s-1880s and incorporated photography:

> C'était vers les années 1860-1880, la frénésie neuve des images ; c'était le temps de leur circulation rapide entre l'appareil et le chevalet, entre la toile, la plaque et le papier … c'était, avec tous les nouveaux pouvoirs acquis, la liberté de transposition, de déplacement, de transformation, de ressemblances et de faux-semblants, de reproduction, de redoublement, de truquage … Les photographes faisaient de pseudo-tableaux ; les peintres utilisaient des photos comme des esquisses. Un grand espace de jeu s'ouvrait[62]. (*Dits et écrits* 707)

As noticed earlier, it is in a context of strong artistic interpenetration that Baudelaire wrote not only his poetry but also his latest art criticism, including his essay on photography. The poet-critic, who claimed that the best form of art review would be poetry, scattered his poems with *correspondances* and looked down on the vulgar platitude of Realism and photography, embodied an artistic *zeitgeist*. Admittedly, this was a critical moment that saw the collision of a pre-industrial Romantic predilection for analogy, transposition and suggestive imaginative evocation with the emergence of a modern penchant for objectivity and accuracy through newly-acquired capacities of photographic reproduction and scientific observation. While, as pointed out by Foucault,

[62] "It happened some time around1860-1880 – the new frenzy for images; this was a time when they rapidly circulated between the camera and the easel, the canvas, the plate and paper … it implied, in addition to all the new acquired hopes, a freedom to transpose, to displace, to transform, to exploit likenesses and false pretenses, reproduction, repetition, and fakes … Photographers would make pseudo-paintings; painters would use photographs as sketches. A huge play space was being opened."

Ortel or Brunet, "la nouvelle frénésie des images" prompted greater intertextuality (and interpictoriality) between literature, painting and photography, it also prompted a semiotic crisis as photography suddenly questioned the nature of the artistic sign, pictorial or literary, and, therefore, the vaster systems of representation that they found.

With the advent of photography, the approximate sign – poetical, subjective and at times arbitrary – produced by the conjoint work of the human mind and the human hand, enters in competition with the exact sign – objective and indexical – produced by means of a machine. For Philippe Hamon, such a development in visual culture characterizes the complexity of Baudelaire's century which he compares to

> un champ de bataille perpétuel mettant aux prises des systèmes et des sous-systèmes de représentation à la fois complémentaires, solidaires et concurrents (l'iconosphère contre la sémiosphère, le positif contre le négatif, l'indiciel contre le symbolique, … l'industriel contre l'artisanal, le populaire contre l'élitiste, le privé contre le public)[63]. (*Imageries* 19)

He further demonstrates how, in this context of constant friction, photography, which at first faced massive iconophobic reactions, gradually shifted from an anti-model ("*un repoussoir*" Thélot 19) to an inter-art model of representation adopted by painting as well as literature. It was, for him, an inevitable phenomenon: "les crises et les révolutions qui affectent l'un des systèmes … ont toutes chances d'affecter ou de forcer à se redéfinir les systèmes voisins[64]" (« Images » 241). The absorption of the photographic model in painting and literature should not, nevertheless, be overestimated and considered as fluid

[63] "A constant battlefield where there is a struggle between systems and sub-systems of representation that are at the same time complementary, interdependent and competing with one another (iconosphere vs. semiosphere, positive vs. negative, indexed vs. symbolical, … industrial vs. handmade, popular vs. elitist, private vs. public)."

[64] "The crises and revolutions which affect one of the systems … are very likely to affect other contiguous systems or to force them to redefine themselves."

and complete. Photography also triggered reactions of resistance, one of which reveals the complex reversal of an analogy initially appropriated by photography while pointing to one reason for Baudelaire's reiterated presence in photographs.

"Arts de la main" vs. "arts de la technique": finding the photographer's imprint in the photograph

Because the invention of photography was claimed in a speech before it was actually shown[65], Brunet contends that the birth of the medium initially was a matter of words as much as pictures (14). The very naming of the technique – Niépce's original *heliography*, the prevailing *photography* and the alternative gloss of "light writing" – testifies to the perception of "an affinity of photography with … the realm of the written" (7). Simultaneously, photography was also dubbed "sun painting" – "a phrase which epitomized the seemingly inescapable confrontation of photography's mechanical character to the painter's artistic freedom" (7). In the early stage of its history, photography appears to have been judged against the preexisting arts of painting and literature and, so, frequently deemed as un-artistic and inferior to the works authored by writers and painters. "An intruder of sorts" (Brunet 8) in the older representational system classically polarized by the "sister arts" of poetry and painting, photography forced people to rethink the established aesthetic categories. The new medium emerged in a

[65] Following Arago's two presentations, Daguerre himself, in August 1839, made a demonstration of the process in front of a large audience including reporters from all over the world and published a manual that was the first book on the photographic technique (Sandler 9). Before that, "very few people outside the inventor's circles, members of learned bodies and European governments had access to the various kinds of pictures produced, let alone the process involved" (Brunet 14).

"cultural matrix" (Brunet 8) where the relation between verbal and pictorial arts was indeed articulated in terms of a competition between "the word [that] is temporal and has an inherent chronology, [and] the image [that] freezes time into a static moment" (Williams 10). With the advent of photography came the replacement of the human creative gesture by a mechanical gesture that made the agent an "operator" and the subsequent spontaneous chemical imprinting of an image on a plate that was independent from human intervention. As the genesis of the new image put the human at a distance, a new distinction overlapped the old ekphrastic rivalry that now opposed human scripting artistry against automatism.

According to Ortel, the competition is no longer between painting and literature but between photography on one side and literature and painting on the other.

> Littérature et arts plastiques paraissent ne plus former qu'un sous-ensemble dans le vaste champ des productions mimétiques modernes. Ces arts, arts de la *graphè*, au double sens d'écrire et de peindre, se voient désormais concurrencés par des images produites mécaniquement … La peinture et la littérature, qu'on rapproche plus volontiers, présentent l'avantage d'être comparables terme à terme : elles partagent une genèse commune (graphique), des institutions semblables (académies), et vivent deux histoires parallèles, autour de mouvements identiques ... La photographie, en revanche, ignore ces points d'appui parce qu'elle est d'abord un médium. Elle environne la littérature et les beaux-arts … multipliant des formes d'interaction difficiles à localiser[66]. (Ortel 12 & 16)

[66] "Literature and plastic arts seem to now form a subgroup in the huge field of modern mimetic productions. These arts, or arts pertaining to *graphè*, with the double meaning of writing and painting, are now threatened by mechanically produced images … Painting and literature, between which parallels are more readily established, have the advantage of being comparable on a binary basis: they share a common (graphic) genesis, similar institutions (academies), and parallel histories with identical movements … Photography, however, does not have these support points because it is first and foremost a medium. It surrounds literature and the fine arts … as it accumulates forms of interaction that are difficult to locate."

In Baudelaire's time, photography, which was "first and foremost a medium", and not (yet) an art, introduced an epistemological "trouble" which led literature and painting to simultaneously borrow some of its distinctive features and redefine their specific place as modes of representation (19). Because photography questioned the essence of the artistic gesture, it undermined a traditional artistic competition by emphasizing the opposition existing between the *graphè* arts – in which the work of the hand is an intermediary for the intelligence of the creator (Gillain 70) – and the *tekhnè* activities – in which the autonomy and automatism of the operation precludes any expression of the human thought. This opposition between arts of the hand and arts of technique is relatable to Baudelaire's own distinction, in *Salon de 1859*, between photography as a de-subjectivized copying technique and painting as the expression of the artist's imagination. Both opinions stress the importance of human mediation in the completion of any artistic gesture, whether literary or pictorial, and the necessity for this human implication to be perceptible, as an expression of subjectivity and agency, in the final work, for this is what makes the essence of art.

In the common light of Baudelaire's aesthetic stance and Ortel's analysis of the period's artistic crisis, the poet's willingness to pose again and again for the camera – a total of seven different sessions between 1855 and 1866 have been traced – takes on a new dimension. I would argue that such lasting interest in the medium can be interpreted as an endeavor on his part to reconcile a personal curiosity for visual technology and an attachment to a traditional human-centered conception of art. Baudelaire was obviously ready to put aside his reservations about photography at times, but only when he knew

that these occasions could lead to the production of artistic images. It is surely no coincidence that he sat for only three photographers, all of whom were hailed as masters of their medium. Baudelaire's letter to his mother where he confessed his desire to have a photograph of her that would suit his liking proves that he was fastidious about photographs and his particularities were the expression of his insistence to defend the status of the artist in the act of creation. Because he opposed the triumph of *tekhnè* and its mechanical "arts", he could only be satisfied with photographic images that would display some form of *graphè*, or the perceptible traces of some artistic temperament: to put it more bluntly, Baudelaire wanted to *see* in a photograph its photographer. And, probably because his eye had much experience in contemplating paintings, he wanted to see painting in photography, or at least the perpetuation of its effects. He is, in that, close to a movement which, outliving the confusing initial phase of the history of photography, sought to resist its industrialization to better promote its artistic possibilities. Thus, Zola, in 1876, wrote this statement which could have been penned by Baudelaire: "la photographie de la réalité, lorsqu'elle n'est pas réhaussée par *l'empreinte* originale du talent artistique, est une chose pitoyable[67]" (Gillain 64, my emphasis). "L'empreinte," – the word is crucial – is, in contrast to the chemical imprint of the light, the imprint left by the skilled photographer on his work, a style and a turn ("*une tournure*") that create an impression, not so much on the paper or the plate, as on the viewer.

When Baudelaire wrote to his mother, in December 1865, he was in Brussels and there he posed for Charles Neyt. Two pictures resulting from their meeting – the "portrait

[67] "The photography of reality, when it is not enhanced by the original imprint of artistic talent is pitiful."

of Baudelaire with cigar" (fig. 10) and the "ridentem ferient ruinae portrait" (fig.11) – show an ageing Baudelaire in a thick coat, looking frankly at the camera, against a neutral background, with no superfluous accessory except the cigar of the first picture.

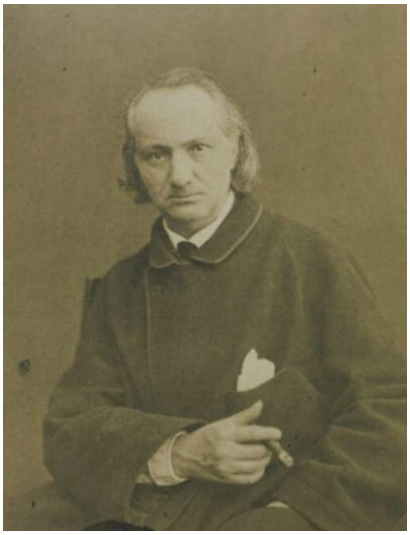

fig.10. Portrait with cigar (Neyt)

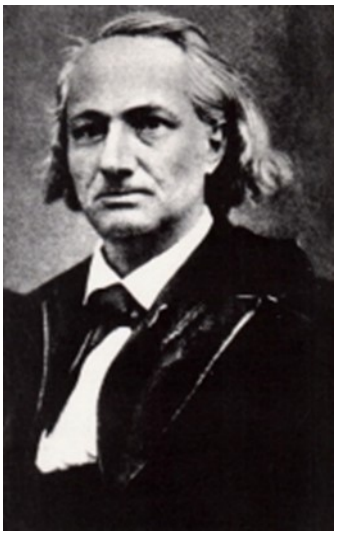

fig.11. "Ridentem ferient ruinae" (Neyt)

Oddly enough, Neyt's portraits appear to typify what the poet deplored in the letter to his mother, that is, the hardness and cruel realism of photographic portraits in general. There is no concealing of the signs of age – these wrinkles, defects and trivialities mentioned by the poet are clearly visible, and so is, in the portrait with the cigar, the bloated veins of the hand that could denote age as well as nervousness or declining health. The uncompromising realism of these photographs together with their austerity (the fastened coat in one picture, the stoic pose in the other, the crude light in both) convey an impression of severity and aesthetic minimalism that characterize Neyt's portraits when compared to Nadar's and Carjat's. The difficulty to precisely date these pictures makes it impossible to know whether Baudelaire posed for the Belgian photographer before or

after writing the letter to his mother and whether the absence of reference to him is voluntary, implying some dissatisfaction with his pictures, or not. The fact is that the writer stresses that, for him, the best portraitists are in Paris and it does not take much to infer that he may refer to the photographers for whom he sat, Nadar and Carjat.

As mention has already been made of Etienne Carjat's photographs (fig.3 and 4), let us go back to them. Baudelaire sat for Carjat on three occasions in 1861, 1863 and 1866 but regularly paid visits to this man who was among his close friends (*Carjat* 59). Carjat made his first three portraits of Baudelaire (fig.3, 4 and 12) – and the accidental photographic duo with Arnauldet (fig.2) – in 1861 when the writer had already published *Les Fleurs du mal*. This series of shots is recognizable for the bow and the loose painter blouse that the writer wears in them.

fig.12. Portrait with crossed hands (Carjat)

The 1863 "portrait aux gravures" (fig.5), which almost shows a different man in the same clothes, offers another perspective on the poet, who was particularly satisfied with this

photograph: “Mon cher Carjat, Manet vient de me montrer la photographie qu’il portrait chez Bracquemond: je vous félicite et vous remercie. Ce n’est pas parfait parce que cette perfection est impossible, mais j’ai rarement vu quelque chose d’aussi bien[68]” (*Correspondance* II: 322). Baudelaire’s reservation towards photography is certainly perceptible in these few words but they nevertheless provide an insight into his photographic taste: a portrait with a studied composition, subtle light effects, and an inter-art reference. When he sat one last time for his friend in 1866, he was suffering from aphasia and Carjat’s somber melancholy portrait was the last – as far as we know today – that was made of the poet before his death (fig.13).

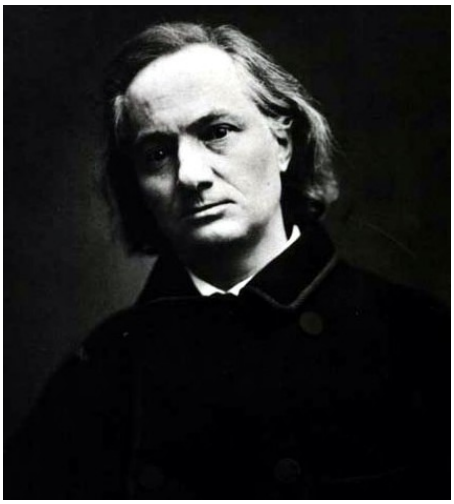

fig.13. Baudelaire’s last portrait

Albeit different, Carjat’s pictures have in common a pursuit for pictorial effects based on light and image definition that relied on the use of the collodion process which produced very precise images. “Carjat sut [s’en] servir à merveille, répartissant sur le

[68] “My dear Carjat, Manet has just showed me the photograph that he was taking to Bracquemond: I congratulate and thank you. It is not perfect as this perfection is impossible but I have rarely seen something that good.”

modèle lumière et ombre naturelle, créant tour à tour le mystère, l'originalité ou l'intimité de l'image[69]" (*Carjat* 11). The light plays, like the halo behind the poet in fig.4 and 13, create dramatic effects, suggesting both relief and intensity; but there is also an impression of warmth and intimacy in Carjat's shots that stands in contrast to Neyt's uncompromising photographic gaze. The poet's attitudes here are more nonchalant and his look softened, as in fig.12, where he seems childlike and somewhat uncomfortable, as though impressed by the camera. There is significant minimalism in these pictures as in Neyt's but the rejection of accessories does not inscribe the model into the timelessness of a visual type but rather highlights the person's simple humanity: "[Carjat] voulait obtenir des portraits simples et vigoureux, montrant les personnages dans des attitudes naturelles et habituelles[70]" (*Carjat* 11). These details reveal Carjat's involvement in the making of his photographic portraits, all the more so as he worked alone. The impression of intimacy and naturalness is the result of his wish not to make strictly controlled automatic pictures so as to let his sitters express themselves while he was only rigorous in the technical use of his medium. The imprint left by Carjat is one of benevolence towards and proximity with his sitter, disclosing his own temperament as a photographer. There is definitely humanism in his photography. Showing inspiration, aesthetic sensitivity and mastery of the medium, Carjat distinguishes himself from the *tekhnè*-devoted studio operators producing photographs on an industrial scale. In his work, Baudelaire had obviously found a promising perspective for the future of photography and the hope that,

[69] "Carjat knew how to use [it] wonderfully to distribute light and natural shadows onto the model and create, in turn, mystery, originality or intimacy in the picture."
[70] "[Carjat] wanted to get portraits that were simple and vigorous, showing people in natural and habitual attitudes."

placed in the right hands, the camera could produce aesthetically pleasing pictures, not too crudely inquisitive, not too servilely realist.

An unconventional figure, Nadar managed to cumulate the extensive production of a large popular studio with a gift for imaginative photographic portraiture. Characterized as the typical man of progress (Thélot 33), Nadar was a *touche-à-tout* who dabbled in caricature, journalism, literature, air balloon travel and photography. Not only was he a talented portraitist, particularly good at composing pictures and utilizing clothing to express his sitters' characters and conceal their defects (Hambourg 47), but he also made several breakthroughs improving the photographic technique. His long friendship with Baudelaire was punctuated by three photographic sessions in 1855, 1860 and 1862. Nadar was the first to photograph Baudelaire when he was still only known for his art criticism: the would-be poet thus entered the history of photography, and French visual culture, in 1855, with a portrait in which he is reclining in a Louis XIII style armchair, his left hand holding a white glove (fig.8). The staging of the picture evokes a meditative mood reminiscent of the contemplative attitudes of the Romantics as well as the more pragmatic tendency of early photography to rely on accessories. One practical reason was that, due to long exposure times, models had to be provided with supports to remain fixed in place (Benjamin, *Work* 278); another was the interaction between the arts that led photographers to borrow some features from painting to claim for artistic legitimacy. But Nadar, according to Roger Greaves, did not have this inclination to imitate painters (192); and, indeed, no other subsequent portrait of the poet displays such

accessory. On the contrary, all the other shots show Baudelaire standing against a neutral backdrop or against a wall.

Nadar's portraits of Baudelaire are remarkable for their expressiveness and their psychological penetration. A creator of atmospheres (*Nadar* 6), he had a knack for exploiting light effects and pose to produce pictures that would best render the personality of his models. Although he opened his first studio in 1854 when photography was entering its industrial phase, his habits were those of an artisan. He would take all the time needed to make his models comfortable and oblivious of the presence of the camera, to manoeuver them into adequate poses until he got the right look, but also to adjust shades and reflecting screens before taking any picture so that his practice of portraiture had nothing to do with automatism[71]. "Nadar est un oeil et une conscience," Roger Graeves notes, "il est aussi … une sensibilité[72]" (73). Like Baudelaire, he had a "great eye" (Hambourg 232) which, combined to his "compassionate understanding of character" that aimed at sincerity (Gossling 13), made him apt to play the role of the revealer of who he felt his sitters were. In this sense, Nadar's photography was a form of mediation whose purpose was to transcend the exact rendering of physical reality to suggest an individual character.

For Nigel Gossling, he had this feature in common with Carjat, and one explanation could be their common past as caricaturists: "While his rival Disdéri … specialized in detail of dress and artful pose and became the favourite of the fashionable,

[71] For a detailed description of a posing session in Nadar's studio, see Greaves p.183-5.
[72] "Nadar is an eye and a consciousness. He is also a sensitivity."

Nadar (like Carjat, who was also an ex-caricaturist) was more interested in personality and character; he drew his sitters from the intellectual world in which he himself felt at home" (37). If Nadar proved to be so skillful at rendering personalities, it may indeed be because, as he himself suggests, he was well acquainted with most of his models: "[un photographe] doit posséder une grande rapidité d'observation et d'intuition pour rendre l'image de son modèle dans l'attitude qui lui soit la plus familière et la plus favorable. C'est pourquoi … le portrait que je fais le mieux est le portrait de celui que je connais le mieux[73]" (*Nadar* 85). There could hardly be a better instance of Nadar's art than his portraits of Baudelaire in which he managed to bring to light the poet's complexity by representing his Romantic propensity for introspection, his attachment to aestheticism that was reflected in his eccentric elegance and even his reluctance towards photography that first made him shun it until a friend put his back against the wall, so to speak, and had him pose for a photographic portrait. One testimony left by Nadar confirms that, for him, as for Baudelaire, photography cannot be artistic in itself; it can only be placed in the hands of an artist that will used it to express his creative disposition:

> [Nadar in 1856] The theory of photography can be learnt in an hour and the elements of practicing it in a day … What cannot be learnt is the sense of light, an artistic feeling for the effects of varying luminosity …, the application of this or that effect to the features which confront the artist in you. What can be learnt even less is the moral grasp of the subject – that understanding which puts you in touch with the model, helps you to sum him up, guides you to his habits, his ideas and his character and enables you to produce, not an indifferent reproduction … but a really convincing and sympathetic likeness, an intimate portrait. (Gossling 37)

[73]"[A photographer] must possess a swift sense of observation and intuition to produce an image of his/her model in an attitude that is the most familiar and favorable for him/her. That is why … the best portraits that I can make are the portraits of those I know best."

It becomes more and more evident that Baudelaire made a careful choice when he sat for Nadar and Carjat. Both of them shared his conviction that some human creativity had to be instilled in the primary mechanical photographic act; both displayed great skills in appropriating the new medium and bending it to their inspiration and each had some visual aptitude, a perceptive eye, that was, for the poet, the sign that they could not but show aesthetic sensitivity. In them, he could find the particular alliance of the eye and the hand (the "seer" and the "maker") that made art possible. Nadar and Carjat were not among the failed painters turned photographers vilified by Baudelaire: they had surely left behind caricature and the realm of *graphè* to enter that of *tekhnè* but they had brought with them their artistic temperament and the habit to be in control of the making of the image. Undermining the status of the medium as "autography" (Marien 3), or spontaneous automatic writing, they proved that the operator could leave a specific personal imprint (*une patte personnelle*) on a photograph. A rejection of the supposed dehumanization of the act of photographic portraiture and the threat of standardization in representation, their work was a reminder that it was possible for a photographer who had both a good mastery of the machine and an aesthetic sense to bring into being visual productions worthy of the name "creation". Such appropriation of the medium could reinstate the photographic gesture as a manifestation of an artist's imagination or what Dumas fils called "la plus-value humaine" (Gillain 64) : "le sens [n'était donc] pas définitivement perdu pour la mimésis photographique : [il pouvait] renaître dans le regard artiste et discriminant du photographe[74]" (Ortel 12).

[74] "Meaning [was therefore] no definitively lost for photographic mimesis: [it could] be revived in the

The writer, the portrait and the economy of the self

It was all the more crucial in Baudelaire's time to assert the human factor in photography as the photographic image suffered from an evident lack of authorship. Produced mechanically, and in several copies, the early photographic image was an anonymous object. Unlike the literary and pictorial creations of the *graphè* arts, it was deprived of any signature or any internal labeling helping the viewer attribute the image to a specific photographer. Most of Baudelaire's portraits were thus not originally signed; and those by Nadar which are now (fig.8) were actually signed by him years later (Plantureux), as though, realizing the value of these shots, he had suddenly wanted to secure his authorship. Admittedly, signing on the image itself meant claiming the artistic status of the image by likening it with a painting. The popularization of the *carte-de-visite* saw the appearance of another less conspicuous strategy: the name and address of the photographer were to be found at the back of the photograph on the card on which it was mounted (*Identités* 11). Again, as with the initial attempts to name the new medium, the "realm of the written" intervened in the photographic realm so as to clarify the origins of its images by signifying the identity of the human being and hand at the origin of their production. Commenting on the common function of signature and style in attributing a unique human authorship, Nathalie Gillain concludes that "la signature est une *trace écrite* et le style, une forme … d'*empreinte* garantissant l'*authenticité* – c'est-à-dire l'*unicité* – de l'œuvre … Il s'agissait [alors] de revaloriser la dimension graphique de l'écriture et, ce faisant, l'intervention proprement corporelle d'une subjectivité en amont

discriminating and artistic look of the photographer."

de la représentation[75]" (71). In a time and a space – mid-nineteenth-century France – where texts and images circulated more and more quickly and widely, the attribution of authorship and its very definition were indeed problematic issues that had particular resonance in photographic portraits of writers.

For centuries, portraiture had primarily been an aristocratic art, "a distinguishing mark of wealth" but the popularization of the daguerreotype put an end to this monopoly so that portraits suddenly became "an everyday feature of middle-class culture" (Williams 1). The possibility of making quick and cheap portraits simultaneously undermined the authority of painting and its economy (Ortel 10). Thus, the specific practice of miniature painted portraits did not survive the invasion of photography. As the range of people who could have access to images, including images made specifically for them, expanded, modes of production, diffusion and reception of images were deeply modified and so was the relationship that people had with them and with other people. Photography established new forms of visual communication and social exchanges and, in so doing, transformed the relationship between the public and artists (including writers). In addition to their personal *cartes-de-visite* that they could circulate among their acquaintances, their portraits were – not always with their permission – reproduced, sold and exhibited in written publications, shop windows or galleries so that their notoriety and the visibility of their status as authors were heightened. At times however, their portraits were also displayed side by side with those of ordinary regular customers

[75]"A signature is a written trace and style a form of … imprint guaranteeing the authenticity – that is, the unicity – of the work … It was [then] a matter of revaluing the graphic dimension of writing and, concomitantly, the truly physical intervention of a subjectivity at the origin of the representation."

of the studio (Williams 41), which blurred the distinction between them and the public, and so undermined their distinctive auctority. In a mutating society in which "personal portraits [were now] displayed in public galleries and portraits of celebrities decorated the home," there came the advent of the "world-as-exhibition" (Armstrong 121).

In the particular case of the writer, the stakes of having one's portrait fixed by photography were even higher as they were social, commercial and artistic. Brunet has argued that "the invention of photography was largely concurrent with the emergence of literature as a commodity and a cultural language of modernity, reflected by the fashioning of the writer figure as cultural value" (114). For him, the facilitated circulation of writers' photographs "contributed to a larger trend of publicization and visualization" that increased the "visibility of their faces and bodies" and the spreading of their images, equating therefore the emergence of the writer's cultural and commercial value with the emergence of a "new social currency" (115). The "unprecedented mobility and exchangeability" (Williams 11) of pictures certainly fostered an economy of the self that turned the writer and his image into commodity values (Brunet 70) but it also allowed the constitution of collections and iconographies by which "the intellectual factory could process knowledge into nuggets of consumable information" (Marien 125). What Brunet does not mention indeed is that the writer, in nineteenth-century France, is an object of speculation and investigation. This is exactly what Goulemot and Oster demonstrate in their study of the various taxonomic discourses surrounding the figure of the writer at that time. In view of the proliferation of the *physiologies*, monographs, fictional biographies and other inquisitive texts taking the writer as their subjects, they conclude that "toute la

littérature du XIX[e] siècle … a eu pour objet … de définir qui est l'écrivain … en tant qu'il se distingue des autres acteurs du corps social et des acteurs du même champ culturel … L'homme de lettres du XIX[e] siècle [est] l'ethnologue de lui-même[76]" (104 & 108). Contending that this phenomenon that is complementary with what Paul Bénichou termed "le sacre de l'écrivain" in the same century is nothing but an endeavor on the part of literary men to invent symbolical statuses for themselves when social and artistic ascension were still precarious, they notice the increasing importance taken by the visual in producing discourses on the identity of the writer: "à partir de 1830, il faut se faire une tête pour avoir accès aux médias … il faut aussi se médiatiser pour avoir accès au public. Le statut d'homme de lettres se conquiert donc par accumulation de portraits … Le portrait de l'homme de lettres devient après 1850 un des topos privilégiés du champ littéraire. Nul n'y échappe[77]" (168).

It is also my opinion that the sudden ubiquity of writers' photographic portraits participated in the circumscribing of the writer's social and artistic identities in Baudelaire's time. If writers by becoming an exchangeable and purchasable photographic sign took on an unprecedented commercial value, they also saw their sociocultural value change. In the wake of Nancy Armstrong's analysis of the social aspect of photographs, I would argue that the new visual status of writers made possible by photography enabled

---

[76] "The whole of nineteenth-century literature … had the purpose … of defining who the writer is … insofar as he distinguishes himself from the other actors of the social body and even from the actors of the same cultural field … the nineteenth-century man of letters is the ethnologist of himself."

[77] "From 1830 on, one needs to make for oneself a distinct face to have access to the media … one also needs to be in the media to have access to the public. The status of man of letters can be gained through the accumulation of portraits … The portrait of the man of letters becomes after 1850 a favorite topos in the literary field. No one can escape it."

them to locate themselves in the sociocultural sphere since "a photograph offers its viewer an image marking a specific position within a larger field of vision" (80). In the case of writers like Baudelaire who consented – even if reluctantly – to be photographed, the adoption of a competing mode of enunciation testified to an acknowledgement of the changes taking place in the mediasphere and a possible will to exploit them for one's own consecration as writers. In this respect, Ortel justly remarks: "Se faire photographier signifiait qu'il [l'écrivain] acceptait d'exister visuellement, et pas seulement par l'écriture[78]" (286). To be photographed was therefore a positioning both in the emerging capitalist cultural market and in the conflicting crisis affecting literature and photography. It implied taking risks in terms of literary prestige and authority because the writer who appeared on photographs found himself in the same situation as famous criminals and promiscuous girls (Ortel 289). It also implied taking risks related to artistic identity and expressivity : "En posant devant la machine, l'écrivain acceptait de soumettre son expression aux lois de la technique … Déjà privé de la parole par l'image, il risquait d'être privé de toute expression par les obligations de la prise de vue : le sujet doit rester immobile[79]" (289). Because the photographic portrait is simultaneously an unprecedented opportunity for the writer to become visible and expand his public and a threat to his art that is all about the capacity to master language and speech, it is an unequaled site of

[78] "[For writers], being photographed meant that they agreed to exist visually, and not only by their writings"

[79] "By sitting in front of the machine, the writer accepted to submit his expression to the rules of the technique … he was already deprived of speech by the image, and yet he risked being deprived of all expression by the necessities of the photographic shot: the subject must remain immobile"

social, cultural and artistic stakes but also of subtle negotiations between literature and photography when it comes to the construction of identities and authorship.

THE RELUCTANT MODEL

The destabilizing of authority and the weakening of auctority

Serge Plantureux noticed a peculiar detail concerning the poet's right hand: it is often concealed in a pocket or underneath the jacket (fig.3 & 7). Such pose, "a modern, deflationary adaptation of the famous Napoleonic gesture" (McPherson 27), was frequent in men's portraits at the time. However, put in relation with the apparently deformed hand that awkwardly holds the glove in Nadar's 1855 portrait (fig.10) or the same physically marked hand in Neyt's a decade later (fig.10), this postural gimmick raises the hypothesis that Baudelaire might have suffered from some physical lesion due to the syphilis he contracted in the 1840s or to his excessive consumption of toxic products (tobacco, hashish, opium) – although no written source contains any testimony that could corroborate this possibility. More medical investigation eventually invalidated the hypothesis and suggested instead anxiety as the source of the crispation and swell in the poet's hand (Plantureux). The anecdote is remarkable, not so much for what it tells of the biographical obsession that still exists today around Baudelaire, as for what it points to on a symbolical level. As underlined before, the human hand is a metonymy of the labor of the *graphè* artist, a symbol of the control of the human mind over the instrument, whether quill or paintbrush, so that the writer whose hand is disabled or visually obliterated can be

interpreted as a writer who is crippled in his authorship. This denial of the capacity to be at the origin of a literary creation is no different from the refusal to give an artistic status to the photographer at the time: there is a common undermining of authorship affecting both the writer and the photographer[80]. Simultaneously, the enfeebled hand, in the light of his personal history, is reminiscent of Baudelaire's own troubles in the literary world: his difficulties to publish, the practice of bread-and-butter art criticism, the censorship exerted on his poems, and procrastination keeping him from completing many of his literary projects. Even more largely, Baudelaire's enfeebled hand can be read as a generic metonymy for the crisis affecting French literature in the middle of the nineteenth century, and by extension the cultural figure of the author.

In his essay "Structures of cultural production in nineteenth-century France", Michael Moriarty, in the wake of Bourdieu, examines the mutations that affected French literature and visual arts due to fast-changing social practices and institutional revolutions in the nineteenth century. As for Seth Whidden, he demonstrates in *Authority in Crisis in French Literature, 1850-1880* how the unstable political situation – notably the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 – produced differing degrees of political, social, and literary censure and pressure that challenged the traditional status of the writer. Brought together, these two studies draw an illuminating description of the broad political, social and cultural context in which Baudelaire's photographic portraits were made – a context in which the notion of authority was attacked, in politics as in cultural production to the

[80] In Neyt's picture (fig.12), a cigar has taken the place of the pen, as though the easy smoky "paradis artificiels" of tobacco, hashish and opium had become a substitute for the more demanding intellectual writing of poetry.

point of destabilizing artistic authorship. Moriarty thus describes how the environment in which artists and writers had to move was deeply transformed by "the emergence of an autonomous sphere" in which

> the variety of artistic and literary production no longer subserves the varied interests of a single elite public but the specifically identified and targeted interests of different groups within what is constituted as a mass public. Producer and consumer are no longer connected through diverse institutions of civil society, but by the workings of an impersonal market. (Collier & Lethbridge15)

The gradual disappearance of patronage, "the decline of the Académie-Salon system" (16), the "collapse of the art market in the aftermath of 1848" (17) in visual arts and the growing dependence of writers on a rapidly expanding but volatile market made the links between artists, writers and public (that is, buyers) particularly fragile. The growing penetration of the cultural sphere by "the logic and structure of capitalism" (28) activated what Bourdieu describes as "a process whereby the universe of the artist ceased to function as a hierarchical *apparatus*, regulated by a particular body, in order to turn itself gradually into a *field* of competition for the monopoly over artistic legitimacy" (31). Under such conditions, the greater autonomy gained by the writer also meant a greater dependence on the market, on publishing capacities and on publicity in his effort to claim a self-positioning in the literary sphere: because of the pressures exerted by the new structures of cultural production, "the budding author, [for Moriarty,] was induced to situate his work in some definite relation to the market" (26). The collapse of the *Ancien Régime* structures put the writer in a vulnerable position and reduced the possibilities of expressing an artistic individuality that would not fit the demands of the public.

Whidden relies on Barthes's analysis in "Death of the author" that "points specifically to the nineteenth century as a key moment in the ever-evolving notion of the author, since it marks the first attempt to undermine the prestige and authority that modern society traditionally bestows upon an author" (3) to argue that the "fluid and evolving" (2) notion of author was at a critical stage in Baudelaire's time. For him, the weakening of auctorial authority is a direct consequence of the weakening of political authority. The advent of capitalism requiring from the writer to fully integrate into the new market certainly dealt a blow to the myth of the writer as a marginal solitary genius but the political context also contributed to putting writers off displaying their *auctority* in too conspicuous a way. While the instability of the political regime showed how variable and inconstant authority could be, censorship was there to dissuade them from opposing their authority as writers to the reigning political authority. As a value, authority was losing prestige in Second Empire France when Baudelaire was writing on and posing for photography, so much so that Whidden concludes that it may be a hallmark for modernity (1). Focusing on mid-century literature, Whidden explores specific trends like the dilution of *auctority* in literary collaboration, its blurring in parody, or the dispersion of "*loci* of power previously singular and unified" (18) in destabilized poetic form. As for myself, my aim is to locate visual traces of this contextual crisis in authority and *auctority* in Baudelaire's portraits.

Striking is indeed the blatant absence of all signs of literary vocation in the poet's photographic portraits. Nowhere is he represented with a book, a few pages, a quill or a pen so that no photograph stages the creation of literature by showing the poet in the act

of writing[81]. This photographic iconography that denies any visibility to the literary *graphè* art to which Baudelaire belonged diverges with the images of him produced in painting. Gustave Courbet in particular constructs Baudelaire as a man of letters more explicitly. His 1848-9 *Charles Baudelaire* and his 1855 *L'Atelier* depict the young man reading, and the first shows a quill placed near him. Courbet locates his sitter in a specific category, the literary man, and puts him in contrast with his own artistic community when, in *L'Atelier*, he places him in a painter's studio as well as in the margin of the painting – alluding possibly to his status as a solitary poet. Baudelaire, when painted by Courbet, appears as a man of letters (both reader and writer) who embodies the interactions between literature and painting. Whereas painting lays emphasis on the literary persona of the man, photography obliterates all means of artistic expression in Baudelaire's portraits. This announces "la disparition élocutoire du poète" ("disappearance of the poet in poetic speech", Whidden 4) described later by Mallarmé, with the difference that the poet, here, does not yield to the power of words but to the power of images that doubly silences him by depriving him of speech and of any distinctive (visual) sign that could connote or denote his being an auctor.

It was indeed noticed by Susan Williams that portraits rarely represent their sitters in the act of speaking since speaking distorts the face (25). One consequence is a disregard of the representation of speech although portraits mostly concentrate on the face, that is, the common locus of individual identity and of verbal power – a disregard

[81] Only in Nadar's very first portrait (fig.8) is there a hint of an allusion to Baudelaire's dedication to poetry in his languid contemplative attitude that could suggest a mind engrossed in poetic creation – and yet, ironically, this most poetic representation of him was made before any of his poetry got published.

that can be particularly damaging in terms of identity construction for those who elected the verb as their creation material. In the middle of the nineteenth century it is also a menace to the Romantic ideal of the poet as both "seer" and "sayer" (Brunet 11), a genius with incomparable *vision* and *speech* capacities – a conception that certainly had some appeal for Baudelaire. In Carjat's, Nadar's or Neyt's pictures, Baudelaire could be anybody, could have any professional or artistic pursuits, not to mention that, in the Arnauldet portrait (fig.2), he is relegated backstage and outshone by an almost anonymous librarian. It is my impression that these portraits do not construct Baudelaire as a writer and certainly not as an auctor who would be remarkable for his mastery of the poetical art. As seen earlier, the poet in "Le Rêve d'un curieux" compared a visit to the photographer's studio with a death experience ("J'allais mourir chez le photographe"); there is, in such a photographic erasure of Baudelaire's singularity and authority as a poet, a prefiguration of Roland Barthes's "death of the author" claim by which the writer as an individual, both in the sense of human being and subjective individuality, has to be severed from his production. With the absence of any sign of auctority, it is, in Baudelaire's photographs, a semiotic death that occurs, an extinction of all signs of individuality that leads to a form of "impersonalization" ("*impersonalisation*") – to paraphrase Barthes's "*impersonnalité*" ("impersonality" 41) – by which the auctor is no longer embodied visually.

In the advent of an age of mechanical reproduction, this phenomenon is also reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's auratic loss in modern art. "A strange wave of space and time; the unique appearance of distance, no matter how close it may be" (*Work* 280),

the aura is "the [unique] quality of unapproachability and authenticity inherent to original works of art" (Williams 45). For the German thinker, it is the chief artistic feature jeopardized by the invention of photography as a technique of reproducibility: transforming artworks into commodities, it changed people's relation to art by allowing the spread of mass-reproduced copy and the capitalist undermining of the concepts of uniqueness and originality. As "it promotes the public exhibition of the work, as opposed to its private and exclusive viewing," photography "dispels aura by reproducing the artwork and making it available to a large number of viewers in a multitude of places" (Yacavone 66). Now, when images depict writers without acknowledging visually the vocational peculiarity of their subjects they also deprive them of their auctorial aura: these writers' images, like the actual photographic object that can be exhibited and manipulated, are reduced to commodities. All distance between them and their public is obliterated: dislodged from his status as an extra-ordinary man of talent, the photographed writer is likely to be desacralized as he yields to photography's appeal and subjects himself to the same rituals and depictions as the bourgeoisie and the masses. The erasure of the auctorial aura consequently implies a sort of simplification of identity, a leveling of the auctor's singularity as an individual caused by the standardization of images in photographic portraits. When the writer is treated like any other sitter, placed in the same poses or the same decors, he is rejected into a state of anonymity where his artistic identity is no longer expressed.

Interestingly, Benjamin's influential photographic concept of the aura echoes Baudelaire's prose poem "La Perte d'auréole" (*OC* I: 352) in which a man tells how he

lost his halo in the mud and went back to moving *incognito* about the city. The risk for the auctor of losing his aureole of singularity can also be interpreted in social terms as stressed by Françoise Coblence who argues that photography for Baudelaire illustrates the passage from crowd to mass because it is undemanding and has no distance (*AB*7: 37). Marien agrees with this view when she sees the controversy raised by photography as a perception of "the threat posed by mass culture to the individual and to individual creativity" (47) as though the new medium allowed the masses to intrude the artistic sphere that had so far been reserved for the privileged, thus reducing the distance between the two social categories. In a context of democratization of the portrait thanks to the invention of photography after centuries of restriction of portraiture to only a happy few, what disturbed Baudelaire in photography was the threat of normality, of losing his singularity that placed him at a distance from others (as in Sainte-Beuve's image of the isolated "folie"), and of being subjected to some exterior authority that would annihilate his own authority and his artistic authorship above all. Fortunately, as demonstrated by Carjat's portraits in which Baudelaire is lit from behind, giving the visual impression that there is an authentic halo around his person (fig.4 & 13), the poet could apparently count on some particularly gifted photographers to give him back some kind of aura, at least a visual one if not an auctorial one.

A prolongation of the Baudelaire paradox: collaborating by resisting or resisting by collaborating?

"C'est un poncif de la littérature du temps [de Baudelaire] sur la photographie, que le sujet photographié y passe pour partiellement l'auteur de l'image – par au moins sa présence physique indispensable, mais aussi par la pose qu'il adopte, le vêtement qu'il porte ou … le personnage qu'il mime[82]." This remark by Jérôme Thélot (36) suggests that if writers like Baudelaire – assailed as they were from all sides (political unrest, crumbling institutions, new media environment, etc.) – could be undermined in their auctority they may nonetheless have been able to retrieve some authorship in photography by contributing to the origination of the photographic representation. This idea of collaboration between the photographer and the writer-sitter connects with Whidden's analysis of literary collaboration under the Second Empire as an alternative form of authorship. The principle of collaboration suggests an awareness of the incapacity to fully endorse the responsibility of authorship as well as an attempt to resist this enfeeblement by resorting to shared authorship. In the context of the early history of photography, when all things related to the medium, and especially who or what was to be considered the source of the photographic image were still confused, this issue of authorship proved rapidly crucial and even prompted trials around the notions of ownership and copyright. As stressed by Thélot, the ambiguity that allowed a fragmentation of authorship in photographic portraits came from the technical fact that

[82] "It is a cliché in the literature on photography in [Baudelaire's time] that the photographed subject is partially the author of the image – if only because of his/her indispensable physical presence but also because of the pose the he/she takes, the clothes that he/she wears or … the character that he/she mimes."

the imprint or trace left by the photographed individual on the plate could be interpreted as the tangible proof of the model's (passive) implication in the genesis of the image (37). Now, in Baudelaire's specific case, it is Thélot's argument that the visually obsessed iconophile poet was necessarily aware of his inescapable involvement in the photographic act, which he describes as a form of collaboration and therefore a form of compromise (38). The ambivalence of the situation – the necessity to compromise and consent to a sharing of the authorship of the image while the image was to mute and erase his literary status – might have pleased the paradoxical Baudelaire. It was an opportunity to gain some control over a work made with a medium that was not his usual means of expression and that he criticized and see if it could be made more artistic.

His insistence on having a portrait made of his ageing mother, while dictating how it should be, is additional proof of his readiness to actively take part in the making of photographs. The prospect of confronting the photographic mode of producing images was also in line with his conception of the creative act as a duel that he formulated in "Le *Confiteor* de l'artiste" and that Benjamin saw as the essence of the shock experience. Collaboration or duel, Baudelaire's involvement in the photographic portrait was certainly not disinterested: what is stake is a power struggle and the recognition of one's agency and originality as an author for the photographer and for the poet. If confirmation is to be given that the photographic portrait was a privileged *locus* where literature and early photography could communicate, Baudelaire's portraits are certainly a good place where to examine how photographs can become sites of negotiation between the two modes of expression. He made no secret of his objection to the aesthetics and the

voyeuristic, narcissistic attitude that photography promoted; and yet he had his picture taken again and again, but only with elected photographers and on his conditions, which means that his very attitude was already a way of exerting some agency and of affirming himself as the source of the photographic act. It is certainly possible to consider this selective collaboration as a gesture of resistance against the symbolic death of the author in writers' portraits. Undermining the photographer's own claim to authorship by empowering the sitter, this critical position that attempts to minimize the fundamentally mechanical nature of photography can also be read as another strategic reaction to restore the primacy of human factor in the production of images: unlike photographers who yield to the dehumanizing mechanical practice of operating a machine on which they have but little control, the sitters are indeed irreproachable in their condition of producers of the image using no tool but their presence and their body. Such a view raises questions however: what are the perceptible traces of the sitter-photographer collaboration in the image? And when it comes to Baudelaire's portraits more specifically, what does the poet reveal about himself in this compromise with photography? What image of Baudelaire, the writer and the man, is generated by his "collaboration" with Nadar, Carjat and Neyt?

Because their writings are still there to give us an idea of what their relationship was like, the collaboration between Baudelaire and Nadar is probably the easiest to examine. Although at variance on the subject of photography, the two men had almost similar views on portraiture which they both saw as an artistic effort to bring to light the sitter's hidden nature. In this respect, a portrait ought not to aim at objective

representation but rather at subjective evocation: it ought to be the artistic rendering of a particular gaze on the sitter's character. This mediating gaze makes the portraitist an interpreter or revealer of the human character. Derived from the word "portrait" that "stems from the Latin word *protrahere*, to draw forth, reveal, extend or prolong, and from the French *pourtraire*, to fashion or represent", the notion that portraiture "not only imitates but reveals [or makes] something manifest" (Williams 6) had always been present in the discourses on portrait painting and, predictably, it was back on the artistic agenda when portrait photography flourished in the nineteenth century. Whereas Baudelaire, obsessed with the painting/photography debate, was deeply concerned with the photographer's personal engagement with his subject and the manifestation of his subjectivity in his portraits, Nadar was more readily convinced by the idea of "*photographie-maïeutique*" (Bassouls 2), or the idea that photographic portraiture was about revealing an individual's personality through the representation of a behavior in an intimate image. And for a very good reason: Baudelaire had considerable doubts about the artistic potential of photography, Nadar did not.

fig.16. Out-of-focus portrait (Nadar)

Under such conditions, a photographic session between Baudelaire and Nadar surely was, to paraphrase Thélot's analysis (33), a battle in a brotherly war opposing the endangered doubting poet and the rising man of progress. The metaphor of the duel is even probably more appropriate to envision the interaction between the two men as it is materialized in the pictures they made together. Because Nadar aimed at exposing his sitter's interiority and achieving intimate resemblance in his portraits, he did not ignore Baudelaire's ambivalence towards photography but rather incorporated it in his photographs. The best example is the series of shots taken in 1861 (fig.16) in which Baudelaire poses standing against a wall. Although he always looks straight at the camera, his body is turned towards another direction – a symbolic posture connoting almost a split personality as one part in the man desires to interact with the camera whereas another refuses to cooperate and seems almost on the go. The wall, blocking the way behind him, impedes any recoiling in the distance and so forces the poet to confront the camera. It is an impression of coercion more than claustrophobia that emanates from

these images: as though trapped, the poet has no choice but to pose for the camera, that is going to "reveal and fix" (Ortel 260) who he is. In these *nolens volens* portraits, it is Baudelaire's wariness of photography that transpires. There is nothing prepossessing in his attitude: his face shows bitterness, hardness and a hint of defiance. Nadar hated the idea of pose. He would give his sitters time to get familiarized with his presence and find in his studio the attitudes that they had outside. Obviously, this strategy was fruitful with Baudelaire, all the more so as their friendship must have helped initiate an intimate interaction, if not a true collaboration between the two men. In Nadar's pictures, the poet is, symbolically speaking, facing the enemy – the photographer who embodies all the new values that he rejects – and the enemy does not deny the antagonism but faithfully records it in his concern to render the man's character. Nadar's mediation in these photographs is, so to speak, one of non-intervention: he does not direct his sitter but gives him all latitude to express who he is while capturing his most revealing attitudes by efficiently using the tools that the photographic techniques give him (light, frame, etc.). Baudelaire's refusal to show himself in a positive light or in a proper submissive petrified attitude signifies then his engagement in the authorship of the portraits.

This attitude that Baudelaire had with his dear friend Nadar he also adopted with Carjat apparently. Although there is less documentation on their relationship, it has been established that Carjat had a remarkable talent for portraying people's personalities. With the noticeable exceptions of the unplanned Arnauldet picture (fig.2) and the portrait with crossed hands (fig.14), which are probably the most spontaneous and un-staged portraits of the poet, Carjat's pictures, like Nadar's, show a sullen, defiant Baudelaire. There is

consequently some continuity between the works of the two photographers in the construction of the poet's identity: in their photographs, Baudelaire exhibits the same mask, the face of a tormented and bitter man who only half-heartedly consented to being photographed. This facial mask is notably created by the photographers' use of light. A remarkably efficient tool in the exploration and revelation of human nature (Ortel 259), it was used in such a way by Nadar and especially Carjat that it visually emphasized Baudelaire's physiognomy and gave access to the model's subjectivity. This mask, no matter how skillfully aestheticized it is by the photographer's technical prodigy, is like a screen that the poet opposes to their inquisitive photographic gaze that aimed at revealing his inner nature. It is the sign of the limited extent to which Baudelaire is ready to compromise with photography: he means to have control over what is revealed about him and, more than his interiority, it is an image that he has fashioned for himself that he means to exhibit in his portraits. His collaboration with his photographers is comparable to that of an actor impersonating a certain character in front of a director. With this defensive strategy that aims at thwarting Nadar's and Carjat's photographic introspection, Baudelaire, again, infuses some form of personal authorship in his portraits. It is a warped collaboration that takes place between the poet and his photographers. The reason is that he does not really desire to let them reveal who he is at the bottom of his soul. It is more interesting to him to have them record which artistic identity he claims. His "posture photographique" ("photographic posture") therefore aims at restoring some form of authorship for him in his pictures by presenting himself

as the author of his own artistic self: it is his consented participation in the supposed collective and collaborative work of the photographic portrait.

In this perspective, one aspect of Baudelaire's relation to photography's aesthetics is characteristic. Let us go back one last time to his letter to his mother where he describes his photographic ideal and to this essential sentence: "Il n'y a guère qu'à Paris qu'on sache faire ce que je désire, c'est-à-dire un portrait exact, mais ayant le *flou* d'un dessin[83]." As his diatribe against photography and realist aesthetics in *Salon de 1859* made it clear, the poet was repulsed by his epoch's obsession with mimetic exactitude and he what he called "l'émeute du détail" ("the profusion of details", *OC* II: 698). His contemporaries wanted to see everything in the minutest details with the crudest objectivity; he wanted to see the contours of objects and figures as blurred because they were then evocative of the dream and wonder he longed for. Promoting "*le flou*" ("fuzziness") as an aesthetic ideal was for him a way of finding reminiscences of his beloved pictorial arts in photography and of transposing his love for the color as against lines to photography: an image's fuzziness makes it "the photographic equivalent of a rapid, unfinished sketch, subverting the denotative properties of the photographic medium" (McPherson 27). "*Le flou*" is the photographic sign that marks the rejection of the realist detail, the attachment to painterly blurred surfaces, the return of dream and wonder but also the seal of modernity and its modification of vision and visibility.

[83] "Only in Paris do they know how to make what I want, that is, a portrait that is precise but has the *fuzzy* quality of a drawing."

For a long time, Nadar's out-of-focus portrait (fig.16) was thought to be an amateur's shot (Pichois and Ruchon 38) and a failed portrait because of its technical flaw. Today, precisely because of this particular aesthetic quality, it is regarded as an iconic picture that epitomizes the Baudelairian conception of the photographic portrait. It is probably because the poet moved that there is a defect in the picture. As the suggestion of movement undermines the objectifying power of photography, the blurriness of the image can be read as another trace of his unwillingness to let the camera fix him in one petrified representation and of his wish to gain auctorial aura by reinstating distance between him and the reader-viewer. Paradoxically, Baudelaire's movement also allowed the photographer to imprint a distinctive style on the image on his picture. Voluntarily produced or not, this opens vast horizons for symbolic interpretations. The blurriness of the photograph first evokes mobility – the same mobility that is at the core of Baudelaire's aesthetic thought and of his depiction of modernity. The image that is not clear is the fleeting visual perception of a glimpse that did not last enough to be fixed on the retina; it is the typically modern mode of vision in an urban environment where people are constantly rushing and constantly assailed by strong but brief visual stimuli ("shocks"). The blurry image is the modern image connoting subjectivity, instantaneity, and incompleteness. There is in it the confirmation of an alternative aesthetic paradigm that Philippe Ortel analyzes as the confrontation between "une esthétique de la complétude quand la photographie se contente d'être une vue" and "une esthétique de l'incomplétude … quand elle se veut un art du regard[84]" (250) and that Armstrong

[84] "An aesthetics of completeness when photography is only a view" and "an aesthetics of incompleteness

describes as polarized by "the gaze" and "the glance": "in the first instance, vision behaves taxonomically to establish a fixed identity, while the second allows perception to encounter things according to individual predilections, revealing … the new possibilities for perception one may encounter in the world" (80).

A blurry image such as Nadar's (fig.16) or Carjat's Arnauldet portrait (fig.2) compromises the establishment of identity because a glance, swift and not immobilized, implies a lack of definition, in all meanings of the term. A glance, unlike the longer and more static view or gaze, is not enough to establish identity, to give a visual and possibly social, artistic, or psychological definition, that is, to evaluate things and beings by preexisting categories. In that, photographic fuzziness compromises the achievement of the type of intimate, revelatory portraits that Nadar valued. The hypothesis that the portrait's haziness is due to Baudelaire's not respecting the instruction of not moving while posing heightens the paradox of his assent to being photographed as he simultaneously poses for the photographer and spoils his work; but it also gives him credit for the authorship of a resistance strategy[85]. By electing "*le flou*" as an appropriate photographic aesthetic, Baudelaire did not simply favor a particular style; he privileged a mode of presence in the visual culture of his time. Certainly, the impossibility to fully reveal and fix the self pleased him: it made him a fleeting image, a blurry and incomplete figure that could not be fully captured even by the photographic technique. This thwarted

---

… when it means to be an art of the gaze."

[85] Robert Graeves, however, gives a more pragmatic account of how the fuzziness was created that points to the photographer as the origin of this singularity that matches so well the poet's personality and aesthetic stance. According to him, it was simply due to the "accidental conjunction" of Nadar's short-sightedness, of a low-quality lens and of a photosensitive emulsion that was not sensitive enough but he acknowledges that Nadar was particularly skillful at applying it to his images for greater expressivity (193).

visualization of his self fitted his own ambivalence as an individual and, although he may not have been aware, it also reflected the contextual authority/auctority crisis by rendering the attribution of one well-defined identity more difficult.

The photographic haziness and the facial mask make Baudelaire an absent or veiled presence in his own portraits in the sense that albeit he is there, posing, he hides his self from the beholder's view and so evades identification. And what if Baudelaire's elusiveness was simply to be interpreted as one of his personality traits – one correlated to his procrastination and his marginal place in the society of his time? What if one of his definitional features was this tendency to be "out-of-focus"? Baudelaire's elusiveness indeed goes beyond photography. In Manet's *La Musique aux Tuileries* (1861-2), the poet appears among a crowd and among the faceless individuals in it. His facial features are hard to make out and, as in Nadar's photographs, he defies the viewer's inquisitive look by looking away in profile. For Sima Godfrey, "the poetic reference has been lost" (Ward 54) in this portrait where the poet is unrecognizable so that, unlike Courbet's paintings but very much like Nadar's, Carjat's and Neyt's photographs, this image deprives Baudelaire of any auctorial aura. More than a form of defiance towards the medium, his attitude in his photographic portraits, can also be read as being, more largely, reflective of the poet's posture in the world. Echoing Sainte Beuve's metaphor of the "*folie*", this reluctance to be part of a society that is mutating and mistreating authors has some resonance with his "conception of the artist as a modern hero … a tragically alienated [figure] etched in suffering and cloaked in solitude" (Mc Pherson 23). Alienation, estrangement and visual and ontological elusiveness, all seem to

converge into a wish to escape easy identification, and thus to be impossible to contain in conventional classifications. Resisting readability, or any limitation to one fixed reading, was a plausible reaction for a poet trying to make a career in an art that was in crisis and that saw its traditional conception of authority being attacked.

Split identity: Baudelaire's multifaceted personae

Nadar once wrote about his friend: "Assuredly the strange in all things remains the dominant characteristic of Baudelaire, and with so many others still obstinate in scrutinizing this brain, in digging up this complex and contradictory soul, it remains for us *to decipher the indecipherable*" (McPherson 21). I have already commented on the poet's singular oxymoronic personality that made him "un homme de contraires" ("a union of opposites"). This is now the moment to determine to what extent it transpires in photography: as formulated by Heather McPherson', "even the unblinking, purportedly "objective" eye of the camera offers conflicting pictorial testimony about Baudelaire's elusive physiognomy and opaque personality" (27). Not unlike the painterly sign, subjective and approximate, the visual sign "Baudelaire" is not stable and one-dimensional but rather versatile and equivocal. As he tried to make Baudelaire's portrait in the early 1850s, Courbet already complained "I don't know how to finish Baudelaire's portrait; every day his face is different" (McPherson 21). The natural versatility of the poet is similarly perceptible in his photographic portraits. His differing attitudes in Nadar's 1855 photograph (fig.8), in Carjat's contrasting portraits (fig.4 & 12) and in

Neyt's later picture (fig. 11) reveal a moody, changeable man. Baudelaire's apparently natural inconsistency surely made his photographers' attempt to make truthful, revealing, intimate portraits more arduous; and yet they managed to deliver this one truth at least, namely, the complexity of the poet's character and his skill in putting on different personae as he would put on different masks. In appearance, Baudelaire's versatility in his photographic portraits makes him an enigma, a sign with no definite signifier that would allow an easy identification and subsequent categorization as photography was thought to provide in this period. Photographically speaking, Baudelaire is not constructed as the poetical auctor; he does not show a fixed, well-defined identity but various identities. Nancy Armstrong has demonstrated how photography made it possible to locate people "in a specific position within a larger field of vision" (80), and notably to locate them socially by identifying them in relation to models, categories and doctrines. Baudelaire's portraits locate him socially *and* artistically.

Ten years separate Nadar's first portrait (fig.8) and Neyt's penultimate portrait (fig.11). Strangely enough, these are certainly the pictures in which Baudelaire most appears as a poet. Nadar immortalized the Romantic streak in the young aspiring poet of the 1850s while Neyt captured the imposing bearing of the ageing man who endured so much for his art. Baudelaire's Horace-inspired Latin dedication "Ridentem ferient Ruinae" confirms the visual impression of enduring fortitude as it refers to a man sniggering as ruins spreads around him. If Baudelaire failed to become one of the Immortals at the French Academy, this portrait, according to Prince Ourousof, inscribed him in the immortality of archetypes: "Loin de l'enlaidir, l'âge a idéalisé le masque du

poète, en y gravant sa destinée amère … et ses aspirations à la Beauté divine. C'est plus qu'un portrait : c'est le symbole du poète[86]" (Pichois & Ruchon 63). Unlike Nadar's and Carjat's photographs, Neyt's picture does not so much refer to the private as to the public man: it is an emblem of a certain poetic attitude in which poetry is seen as an artistic accomplishment by which an individual can socially distinguish himself. Despite the absence of any symbol associating him with poetry, Baudelaire is obviously perceived here as embodying some preconceived idealization of the figure of the poet as popularized by Lamartine or Victor Hugo: a troubled but persevering inspired man who is not afraid of looking ahead at his time. It is interesting to view Nadar's and Neyt's photographs in terms of trajectory as they underscore the evolution of Baudelaire from aspiring to established poet and it is even more interesting to consider them in relation to his other photographic portraits as they attest to the convolution of the trajectory.

When he died in 1867, Baudelaire, Paul Griener notes, had managed to reverse the image he had in his first literary essays, namely the image of a serious art critic suddenly tempted by poetry (*AB* 7: 37). Before being recognized as a poet, Baudelaire was thus an art critic and the Baudelairian iconography testifies to this stage in his literary career in both painting and photography. There is of course Carjat's "portrait aux gravures" (fig.5) in which he is surrounded by drawings but there are also Courbet's *L'Atelier* and Fantin-Latour's *Hommage à Delacroix* in 1863-4 where he is represented with painters (Whistler, Manet) and critics (Duranty, Champfleury). These portraits

[86] "Far from making him ugly, age idealized the poet's mask by imprinting on it his bitter fate … and his aspirations to divine Beauty. It is more than a portrait: it is *the* symbol of the poet."

situate Baudelaire in an artistic community and construct the poet-critic as being close to the graphic arts and painting and as even closer to the Romantics and Delacroix than Courbet and the Realists if we go by his contrasting position (estrangement vs. proximity) in Courbet's and Fantin-Latour's paintings. Intertwined within this predilection for visual arts is another identity trait that is also visually marked. One thing is indeed blatant in all Baudelaire's photographic portraits and it is the apparent great care with which this esthete and art lover would choose and combine his clothes.

It is a conventional idea that fashioning one's outward appearance can be likened to an artistic gesture by which one shapes one's public image; it is also one of the characteristic gestures of the dandy. The cult of beauty is what unites the art lover and the dandy but only the dandy transforms this cult into a social and visual claim. On the surface, dandyism is the outward exhibition of pieces of clothing (Baudelaire's bow in Carjat's portraits for instance) that are used as visual statements underlining singularity and the refusal to conform: "le dandysme est un mouvement de réaction et de négation[87]" (Becker 181). The dandy's attitude embodies the opposition of the individual to the mass, and to standardization as he seeks difference and novelty in an atmosphere determined by norms, rules and predictability (Becker 120). For Baudelaire, who wrote about dandyism in *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, being a dandy is a prolongation of his opposition to Realism, photography, and progress – all these phenomena that mark an oversimplifying massification and vulgarization of aesthetic tastes resulting from the emergence of consumption society. His time is a time of crisis and transition and, as he

[87] "Dandysm is a movement based on reaction and negation."

states in his text, dandyism is an aesthetic response to periods of transition (*OC* II: 711). The heavy reliance of dandyism on visuality and the wish to stand out in the new visual environment necessarily fulfilled Baudelaire's own passion for images. Through dandyism, the poet could fashion a visually striking image of himself: he could be sure to leave a distinct visual mark in people's minds with his carefully dressed figure before leaving an otherwise more intellectual mark with his writings. And the strategy was bound to be particularly efficient with photography: if Baudelaire could not easily author himself as a poet and auctor, he could at least author himself as a dandy and an esthete. Beyond the conspicuous exposed sartorial signs of uniqueness and eccentricity, there was in dandyism the promotion of personal singularity as reflecting the aristocratic superiority of the mind (*OC* II: 710). In a most photographic way that is reminiscent of Nadar's and Carjat's conceptions of the portrait as a revealer of interiority, dandyism, for Baudelaire, was the grandiloquent exhibition of outward signs that were supposed to signal an equally impressive personality, artistic and intellectual.

Four pictures (fig.3, 5, 10 & 16) illustrate particularly well what the dandy's typical character is: the mask and pose of the poet, combining defiance, confidence and impenetrability are reflective of the dandy's attitude to the world. To the destabilization of the traditional hierarchized society and its values, he opposes the mask of impassibility and "l'inébranlable résolution de ne pas être ému" ("the unwavering resolution of remaining unmoved", *OC* II: 712). Like Baudelaire who seeks wonder only in the contemplation of art, he refuses to be impressed by progress and the vulgar novelties of his time; and if he dresses himself aesthetically and behaves elegantly, it is

because he wants to be a more legitimate cause of wonder for others (Lemaire 48). As few people will be able to stand out from the collective mass, the dandy is for Baudelaire a modern hero engaged in a battle against the spreading uniformity of his period (Becker 112). The dandy is not a mere futile materialist; he is a challenge, visual and intellectual, to his society and culture. For Karin Becker, the revolt of the dandy becomes, with Baudelaire, more than an aesthetic posture, a cultural campaign (122). She attributes his moving away from sheer aesthetic eccentricity to a more intellectual conception of dandyism to his personal trajectory as an ambitious man of letters.

If Baudelaire shows signs of originality in his dress in most of his photographic portraits, there is indeed no ostentatious sign of wealth and luxury. Unlike most of his predecessors, he was no rich aristocrat and his financial problems kept him from the traditional form of dandyism: with him, high society dandyism, made possible by material ease, is replaced by a dandyism for poets, artists, and bohemians who lead a modest life. For Becker, it is this economic reality which prompted the poet to devise his theory of dandyism by which he favored intellectual superiority over marks of wealth (110). His photographic rebelliousness reflects this necessary expansion of dandyism beyond the mere exhibition of exterior signs of singularity. By giving his preference to unclear images and playing with his natural changeability, Baudelaire adopts a posture that gives him control and agency. So as to compensate the humiliation of poverty, he creates for himself a new personality, imperturbable and arrogant, that protects against the cruelty of the world like an armor. “Ainsi, le dandy s’invente une image artificielle

de sa personne, une façade glaciale qui lui permet d'abriter sa douleur[88]" (Becker 111). Baudelaire's photographic portraits reveal thus the progress of a process of self-determination by which an author like Baudelaire repeatedly claims his difference and affirms himself as an Other in the culture of his time. The poet, who defined dandyism as "le besoin ardent de se faire une originalité …, une espèce de culte de soi-même[89]" (*OC* II: 710), seems to have invented an image for himself in each of his photographic sessions. In so doing, he resisted the stasis of photography and manifested his discomfort in being categorized according to the visual and cultural stereotypes of his time.

Interestingly, Susan Williams argues that "all portraits combine the general and the individual," that is "the general categories into which all humans fall and an individual manifestation of these categories" (17). In Baudelaire's case, the specific always seems to have the upper hand of the general as he appropriates established schema and reworks them so as to not be confined in them. This mixture of general and specific echoes his dichotomy between eternal and transient in his definition of modernity. In this perspective, Baudelaire is a modern poet because he has the capacity to navigate between distinct polarities, even though such mobility generates ambivalence and contradiction. As a whole, Baudelaire's photographic portraits reveal the poet's natural versatility and his mobility between different spheres and different positions. When it comes to identity, the overall impression for the viewer is one of multiplicity and fragmentation. The absence of any visual reference to his occupation as a poet is

[88] "In this way, the dandy invents an artificial image of his person, a cold facade that enables him to conceal his pain."
[89] "The pressing need to create for oneself some originality …, a sort of cult of one's self."

symptomatic of the crisis in auctority described by Moriarty and Whidden but, maybe more surprisingly, so is this proliferation of identities that are represented in the photographs (dandy, art critic, bohemian artist, etc.). In their works, Goulemot and Oster and Diaz demonstrate how, after the consecration of the writer at the beginning of the 19th century described by Bénichou, the crisis affecting authority and authorship fragments the established auctorial model into a variety of models precisely circumscribed and fixed by a specific literature that is all devoted to describing what it is like to be a writer at the time. José-Luis Diaz in particular has shown that writers were then compelled to define an auctorial identity for themselves by adopting preexisting auctorial scenarios (dandy, *poéte maudit*, romantic genius, "*poète-misère*") that would enable them to situate themselves on the literary scene.

Summing up this process of self-genesis (*auto-genèse*), Diaz explains:

> C'est tout naturellement par des moyens littéraires qu'un écrivain est amené à se définir une identité auctoriale … et toute une *scénographie*. C'est par des textes et des paratextes spécifiques qu'il cherche à se déterminer une identité propre à pouvoir fonctionner comme une sorte d'« indicatif » de son œuvre. L'auteur sera ainsi, au bout du compte, quelque chose comme *sa propre oeuvre*[90]. (*Devenir Balzac* 16)

I would argue that Baudelaire's photographic portraits are among the paratexts mentioned by Diaz in which he sought to assert his own auctorial identity by paradoxically exploiting the possibilities of a medium that was not his and that was one of the reasons why his medium was in crisis. In so doing, Baudelaire shapes for himself a

[90] "It is quite naturally through literary means that a writer is led to define for himself/herself an auctorial identity … and a scenography. It is with specific texts and paratexts that he/she seeks to determine an identity that can act as a sort of « indexical sign » of his/her work. The author is then, in the end, something like his own oeuvre"

unique ambivalent personality that reflects his passions, hates, anxieties and values (specific) but also embodies the collapsing of the traditional auctorial model that is forcing the writer to reinvent himself along new lines but with no hope for cohesion because all the institutions and procedures (basically all forms of authority) that used to hold the model together have been weakened or suppressed (general). Baudelaire wanted to be unique, singular, distinct, impenetrable, invisible, atypical, enigmatic, indescribable, indefinable… Ironically, and paradoxically, his photographic portraits reveal that, in the end, he might have been the most emblematic author and auctor of his troubled time.

Chapter 2. Colette and the cinema, or the appropriation of visual media for the celebration of the self

ICONIC COLETTE

Colette and the cinema: "un attachement chronique … divers et multiforme[91]"

As I am writing these lines, rumors have been circulating for almost a year: British actress Keira Knightley is to star in Walsh Westmoreland's new movie *Colette*, which, as made explicit by its title, is a biopic on the twentieth-century French female author Colette. The production team behind the project is the same as for Todd Haynes's recent 2015 hit *Carol* which tells the unconventional love story between a young female photographer and an older woman in the 1950s. The choice of Colette as a subject for a movie surely confirms the team's predilection for nonconformist strongminded female characters with liberated sexuality. Colette was indeed acclaimed as a prominent writer in her time but she was also famed for her homosexual affairs and her scandalous behaviors by which she showed that she had no problem with cross-dressing and (artistic) nudity. It is not the first time that the modern audiovisual media of cinema and television take an interest in the author, her long tumultuous life and her numerous works. Colette is among the writers who, during their lives, saw the invention of the cinematograph as well as the adaptation of their works for the screen. As far as she is concerned, the partnership with the cinematic medium started at quite an early stage of her career.

91 "A chronic, diverse and multiform attachment" (Virmaux 18).

Alain and Odette Virmaux traced the first concrete movie project back to 1916: it was an adaptation from Colette's 1909 novel *L'Ingénue libertine* entitled *Minne*[92] with actress Musidora but the movie was apparently never finished or never released (515). Musidora and Colette knew each other well as they had played in the same revue at the Ba-Ta-Clan theater in 1912 and the former was again to play in the adaptation of the writer's 1910 novel *La Vagabonde* which was released in Paris in 1918 but of which nothing but a few pictures remain today. The writer was keeping close track of what the cinema was doing with her works: in 1916, Colette had been to Paris to visit the set of *Minne*; in the spring of 1917 she traveled to Italy for the shooting of *La Vagabonde*. As she confessed to Marguerite Moreno in a letter in April 1917 she had no reason to be dissatisfied with the adaptation (Pichois & Brunet 230) and, as will be analyzed later, her description of the shooting in the 1917 article "L'Envers du cinéma" demonstrates her eagerness to observe the burgeoning cinematic microcosm and share her impressions with the public. Another sign of her enthusiasm is her decision to write an original script for the cinema. So, as she was still in Italy, she started to write what became *La Flamme sacrée* after Musidora worked on the adaptation and technical breakdown of the script. Shot in Paris and released in 1920, the movie is now missing and, again, only a few photographs have survived until today (Virmaux 516, Pichois & Brunet 231).

After Musidora's first adaptations, many others were made by various directors during Colette's lifetime. *La Vagabonde* and *Minne*/*L'Ingénue libertine* in particular

[92] *Minne* and *L'Ingénue libertine* actually refer to the same text. Colette wrote *Minne* in 1904 and *Les Egarements de Minne* in 1905, and then she merged them into one volume in 1909.

were adapted again, respectively by Solange Bussi in 1931 and by Jacqueline Audry in 1950. Audry had also adapted *Gigi* in 1949 – with Colette writing the movie's dialogues – before Vincente Minnelli famously turned it into a Hollywood musical in 1958, and she later directed *Mitsou* in 1956. Two other notable adaptations were Pierre Billon's *Chéri* in 1950 for which Colette again wrote dialogues and, above all, Claude Autant-Lara's 1953 *Le Blé en herbe* which caused quite a stir when it was released in a still fairly puritan post-war France due to its representation of adolescent sexuality. After Colette's death, movie adaptations made from her works became rarer but television took over. Like cinema, television favored the writer's most popular works and her novels over her memoirs and other more explicitly autobiographical works. The *Claudine* volumes, but also *Chéri*, *Julie de Carneilhan* and *Le Blé en herbe* were thus adapted and shown on French television between 1962 and 1990. Before Walsh Westmoreland's current project, television has most often shown biographical films on Colette. Although there was a rumor in 1948 that Marlene Dietrich would embody Colette on the cinema screen, no movie actually ever came out and no other project was brought to a successful conclusion. French television, on the contrary, produced the four-part telefilm *Colette* directed by Gérard Poitou-Weber in 1985 and the two-part *Colette, une femme libre* directed by Nadine Trintignant in 2003.

Colette, or Mme Sidonie-Gabrielle Gauthier-Villars as she was then known, already lived in Paris, had already published chronicles in the press under the name "Colette Gauthier-Villars" and already had some popularity of her own in the city's high society when Antoine Lumière introduced his two sons' invention at the Grand Café in

Paris: on December 28, 1895, “the Cinematograph” devised by Auguste and Louis which made it possible to project prerecorded animated pictures on a screen was indeed revealed to the Parisian public who was immediately enthusiastic. A few months apart in 1895, a new medium and a new writer thus started their careers and they were to regularly come into contact in the future. According to Claude Pichois and Alain Brunet, the theatrical stage as well as the cinema screen always had a strong appeal for Colette (122). It is a well-known fact that she followed a stage career, but it is less known that she got involved in cinematic projects and that she wrote many pieces about the cinema as early as 1914. As stated by Alain and Odette Virmaux, it would be an exaggeration to say that the cinema was “la grande affaire de sa vie” (“the chief preoccupation of her life”) but she always kept an eye on what was going on so that they could distinguish three periods in her life when the cinema had some more importance for her (15). One first significant moment is what they call “the Musidora period”, from 1914 to 1919, when the first adaptations were attempted – generally with Musidora playing in them – and Colette started to write press columns. Then came 1931-1935, when Colette wrote dialogues, scripts or subtitles for several movies. Finally, between 1947 and 1953, “c’est l’apothéose de l’écrivain à l’écran” (“it is the writer’s apotheosis on the screen”, 15) with several successive adaptations made from her books and the shooting of a nonfiction film about her in 1950.

Whether she directly contributed to the creation of movies or included the cinema as a subject in her writings, Colette was clearly among the French writers who not only acknowledged the appearance of the new visual means of representation but also

followed its evolution – very much like Baudelaire had done with photography in the past. In doing so, she left literary testimonies about this crucial foundational period in the history of cinema but also participated in the interaction that soon appeared between the world of literature and that of the moving image. Colette's relationship to the cinema shows that this interaction could be grounded in professional practices covering different tasks in relation with the creation, promotion and artistic evaluation of cultural products as well as in personal penchants and social contacts. Her implication was indeed all the more predictable that she was in touch with avant-garde artistic circles and with the entertainment world, that is, with universes that quickly adopted the cinematograph as a promising technique and possibly a promising artistic medium.

If Colette quickly took an interest in cinema and kept it during her whole life, it is also because, beyond her own curiosity, some of her personal acquaintances nurtured it. Several of her closest friends, such as Musidora, Marguerite Moreno or Jean Cocteau were themselves active agents in the development of cinema in France. Like Colette, they were primarily theater people who almost instinctively added a cinematic string to their bows when it became evident that the cinematograph would be more than another short-lived optical gadget. The involvement of theatre people like Colette and her friends is a reminder that the cinema, being initially perceived – like photography had been in its infancy – as a technical prowess and innovative way of making images, did not, in the beginning, have its own professionals. When the cinema imposed itself as a new form of storytelling, it had to turn to the theater world to find adequate performers, writers and directors who would make films credible and enjoyable as spectacles. That is why so

many actors' performances in early (silent) cinema looked like the acting and the performances that the public could see in the same epoch in theaters, and in pantomimes in particular (Marie 64). The beginnings of the cinema were very much a matter of theatrical experience in the end as they required from people like Colette, Musidora or Moreno to transfer the skills that they had acquired with one medium to another with no real transition or training. When Colette started to flirt with cinema, during this first stage that the Virmauxes called "the Musidora period", it was still a cinema of instinct and amateurism more than a cinema of conventions and specialization.

This initial interpenetration of the cinematic with the theatrical was, to some extent, to characterize Colette's almost lifelong relation with the cinema. In many ways, the writer-cum-comedian-cum journalist's interaction with the cinema occurred through the prism of theatricality – and I mean by that a set of habits, practices, processes, and perspectives even, that were peculiar to the world of theater. One particularity of Colette's biography is that, surprisingly enough, although she had significant experience as a stage comedian and a variety theater artist, she never took the plunge and actually acted for the cinema. And yet, that was certainly not for a lack of ego or boldness if we go by her biographers' opinion: "D'où lui vint ce désir d'être mime, danseuse, actrice? De la tendance, profonde en elle, de se montrer et de s'affirmer[93]" (Pichois & Brunet 158). When it comes to cinema, Colette stuck to a work done in the shadows which required from her to perform away from the camera. With her articles, she placed herself

[93] "Where did this desire to be a mime, a dancer or an actress come from? From a profound inclination in her to show and assert herself"

in the role of a critic, assessing the merits of the new medium like an expert spectator from the shadowy anonymous space from where the public experience the movies. In addition to judging the achievements of the cinema of her times, Colette also found herself in the position of contributing to the production of movies but always by intervening in the storytelling. Her dialogues and scripts, whether they were adapted from her works or not, enclosed a work on language for narrative purposes that was both different and very close to her literary pursuits as an author of novels and plays. As she herself could not perform, Colette set about doing what she knew best: tell stories. Paradoxically enough, her contribution to the cinema fortified her posture as a multitalented (and possibly multimedia) author more than her status as a performer.

There were periods when the cinema proved rather hesitant about setting up projects in relation with her. Such cautiousness may have been caused by her still somewhat scandalous reputation or by a certain fear of her familiarity with the medium which might have led her to interfere or to pass unrequired judgments (Pichois & Brunet 484). Nevertheless, the ties between the author and cinema were never completely severed. Colette was certainly no film director, no actress, not even a script writer strictly speaking: rather, she was an author who had, all along her career, various opportunities to expand her linguistic art in the service of the development of an emerging medium which, although eminently visual in nature, soon comprised phenomena of narration and verbalization. Probably more an auxiliary initiate than a true insider, Colette could get involved and adopt perspectives on cinema in specific ways that few people could boast in her time. Her various experiences in fiction writing, acting, miming or journalism fed

her own reception and perception of the cinema as a medium and, conversely, the reception of her contributions to cinema was often conditioned by her achievements in literature and in theater.

Interestingly, Colette's relation with cinema was not a one-way relation. If she made contributions to its history, the cinema contributed to the expansion of her *oeuvre* and notably of its epitextual dimension. As early as the 1910s, when she was still a novice in literature, Colette was not only to be found in texts, in theatrical performances but also in cinematic works – even though her presence was never a conspicuous one, and certainly never an inescapable larger-than-life image on a screen. Colette's presence in the world of French cinema in the first half of the twentieth century was relatively discreet compared to her presence on the vaster cultural scene but it was nonetheless, as I shall try to demonstrate, meaningful – meaningful in particular for the examination of both the construction of her auctorial identity and the emergence of specific interactions between literature and the cinema during the early history of the latter.

Colette in pictures or the fragmentation of public image

As noted by her biographers, the 1950s were for Colette a final triumph. She had become a major figure in French culture and could hardly be ignored as she was present in all existing media. Adapted for the stage and for the screen, renowned abroad (Walter Benjamin and Truman Capote, for instance, visited her), chosen to be a member of the Goncourt Academy, recognized and examined by critics and scholars (Gonzague Truc

Madame Colette, Pierre Trahard *L'Art de Colette*), often interviewed by the radio and portrayed in a documentary film by Yannick Bellon in 1950, Colette was paid public homage and her person was the focus of attention as much as her work. Over the years, she had become what we now call a media personality. The writer known as Colette eventually prevailed over her other professional identities and was the object of various discourses in various media which would emphasize, in turn, her specificity as a female writer, her long experience in the French literary world, her artistic past, her incomparable writing or her status as public figure. The renewed and intensified attention received by Colette at the end of her life is nothing but the ultimate stage in a long process of "starification" that was an integral part of her career and that characteristically involved a strong reliance on the visual media of the period.

Allegedly one of the most photographed women of her time, Colette started to be represented in visual works even before she earned a literary and artistic reputation as "Colette". When she married Henry Gauthier-Villars, a.k.a "Willy", in 1893, she married a Parisian socialite who was identified as musical critic, publisher, author of popular novels (although he generally resorted to ghost-writers to write the texts he would sign) and compulsive seducer. Because he was proud of his reckless young wife, because he was a figure of prominence in Parisian high society and because he had this ambition to hear himself being spoken of, Willy cherished being an object of attention and, consequently, of representation. While married with Colette, he, who had an undeniable skill for publicity, had several portraits of them painted by artists like Jacques-Emile Blanche or Eugène Pascau but had even more photographic portraits made. If paintings

were usually meant for private usage, photographs were also used for professional purposes. The Gauthier-Villars couple would thus gladly pose for intimate informal pictures, showing them with their friends on vacation for instance, but they also posed for more official pictures where the staging and attitudes reveal more professional designs.

Since the popularization of photography and the invention of the ritualistic and socially significant *carte-de-visite* portraiture by Disdéri, photography had become a means of communication, a way of circulating one's own image for socializing and professional purposes. Willy had apparently understood that, although his business was literature, images could prove an invaluable asset in terms of publicity. More than all the official classic photographic portraits of the Gauthier-Villars couple, one series of shots by photographer Charles Gerschel is enlightening evidence of the couple's awareness of the power of pictures. In 1902, following the success of the Claudine books (*Claudine à l'école* 1900, *Claudine à Paris* 1901, *Claudine en ménage* 1902[94]), he asked Gerschel to make portraits of him with Colette dressed as a schoolgirl. These shots were meant to be circulated as postcards complementing the books and to be interpreted as visual re-creations of the fictional literary heroine (Claudine) and of her creator (Willy). This photographic prolongation of the text functions, I would argue, as an epitextual extension of the books at the juncture of reality and fiction endowing the text with an actuality that transcends the limits of literature. On a more concrete note, the existence of such

[94] The Claudine was to count four volumes in the end published between 1900 and 1903. They describe a young provincial girl's growth to maturity, her education, her moving to Paris, her marriage to Renaud and subsequent adulterous homosexual affair with a woman named Rezi. Two more books, *La Retraite sentimentale* and *La Maison de Claudine*, were later added, in 1907 and 1922, but are only loosely related to the initial series.

photographs falls within "the modernizing reconfiguration of material culture which [took] place throughout the nineteenth century" as analyzed by Janell Watson (2). It is coherent with the accumulative logics marking material culture after the Industrial Revolution and the beginnings of consumer society when practices of "collecting, consuming, classifying and describing" (1) gave objects a new dimension both on the market-place and in people's lives. In this configuration, such images, existing at the margins of literature, embodied the ambivalent position in which writers now were, between cultural authority and commodities. In an age of mechanical reproduction ensuring the proliferation of images, promotional pictures showing authors certainly modified the perception of what auctority was but they also suggested that the "literary world [was being] overtaken by commercialism" (Moran 7).

For Colette, Gerschel's photographs were surely an occasion for confirming her nascent popularity on the cultural scene but they were also to contribute to a lasting confusion between Colette and her works. The irony of the situation is that when these pictures identifying her with Claudine were circulated Colette had not yet been officially recognized as the author of the books, which were then published under Willy's name. After divorcing Gauthier-Villars and making a name for herself, she continued to be a frequent model for visual portraiture and an equally frequent object of media coverage. Throughout her life, Colette appeared in paintings, in studio photographic portraits, in press shots or in cinematic documents. The Colettian iconography is therefore quantitatively vast and qualitatively rich and varied. Unlike some writers, Colette did not shun publicity but, coached as she was by Willy in the early stage of her public life, she

accepted it as just another task incumbent upon writers and artists. She did not shy away from cameras, even when she became old and crippled with arthritis. For lack of sources suggesting that becoming a media and visual icon was felt by her to be a burden or a useless degradation of her literary status, critics can only be inclined to interpret her visual omnipresence as a personal willingness to be involved in processes of representation and to explore and exhibit diversity in the visualization of her artistic identity. Colette's image is accordingly far from being static and immutable. It is, on the contrary, variable and manifold, determined by contexts of representation and by Colette's own many-sided, atypical career. A quick review of three photographs emphasizing her chameleonic professional identity will highlight the changeability of her image, which, I shall argue in this chapter, can be seen as reflective of her auctorial idiosyncrasy. They also contain the ferments of tendencies that Colette's involvement with cinema will confirm.

The first picture (fig.17) belongs to Gerschel's 1902 series depicting Colette as Claudine. When the picture was taken, Colette had been one of Willy's ghostwriters in his flourishing publishing enterprise for some time but no one knew that she was the actual author of the Claudine books so that this portrait and its counterparts must have appeared to the public of the period as a playful, yet somewhat deviant, conjugal enactment of Willy's best-seller presenting his younger wife in the ambiguous cumulative role of daughter/youthful mistress/Pygmalion creation.

fig. 17. Colette as Claudine

This picture, however, stands out because Colette is precisely on her own, in a situation of autonomy that prefigures her future separation from Willy and personal artistic achievement. Colette, here, fully embodies the character of Claudine – only the presence of her own dog links the portrait to an extratextual non-fictional reality in which this young woman is known as Mrs Gauthier-Villars. Her outfit, and especially the famous round white collar still referred to as the "Claudine collar" in French is what identifies her as the literary heroine. If clothes generally do not make the man, Colette's clothes in this picture make the character. Her outfit acts as a signifier of fiction by which name-specific identification is made possible. Gerschel's photograph is the portrait of a literary icon made tangible and visibly human, a materialization of the age-old readers' fantasy of seeing literary characters become real.

For those who know that Colette is the author of Claudine's adventures, it is also a form of theatricalization that blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction as well as between human author and created character. This visual assimilation enacts the

preconceived idea that author and character are one and the same and that, consequently, the author can be detected in his/her characters. Gerschel's pictures actually echo a particularity of Colette's literary creation that has often been commented, that is, her tendency to incorporate autobiographical elements in her writings. It is now known that the four Claudine texts were heavily inspired by Colette's memories of her own childhood in Burgundy so that the visual blending of author and character in the 1902 photographs are actually not so far-fetched: in a way, Colette was Claudine. Her acceptance of such visual staging nonetheless elicits the following question: was Colette as prone to implicate herself, her person and her personal history, in her cinematographic contributions as she was in literature? It is a question I shall try to answer in this chapter. One final detail in this picture however has its importance. Impertinently looking at the camera, Colette is simultaneously revealing her calf to the viewer. It is an audacious gesture for the period but one that matches the heroine's personality and the tonality of the eponymous books. Self-assured and sensually mischievous, Claudine was indeed an uncommon character in the French literature of the 1900s (*ABCdaire* 44). Colette's attitude is certainly meant to render this aspect of the character but it can also be read as a daring marketing gesture which was bound to titillate viewers and make her popular. In many ways, this 1902 photograph points to elements that were to become associated with Colette and to be amplified in her career, such as a claimed taste for theatricality and a readiness to challenge conventions.

Both of these attributes are blatantly perceptible in the next photograph (fig.18). Dating from 1908, it represents Colette and comedian Georges Wague in the pantomime

La Chair (*The Flesh*). She had made her debut on the stage two years before and was immediately praised for her talent as a mime. There was apparently some form of escapism in her choice to move to the stage as in her concomitant Sapphic friendships, which helped her find a way out of her marital and professional partnership with Willy (Brunet & Pichois 124). Being a mime enabled Colette to gain more autonomy and to discover the world of variety theater which was to later inspire several of her texts.

fig.18. Colette in *La Chair*

fig. 19. Walery's publicity postcard

Undoubtedly, miming was also coherent with her bold, energetic personality as well as her personal artistic penchant and sensitivity to visual aesthetics. *La Chair*, first performed in 1907 has been remembered for one particular scene which is precisely the subject of this picture and in which Colette's breast was revealed after her dress was torn. Causing a scandal at the time, this most theatrical gesture had the merit to rouse the public's curiosity and to attract them to the theater. It was probably as efficient publicity as the publicity stills by photographer Lucien Walery reproduced on postcards (fig.19).

Placed side by side, the two pictures give insightful information about the subversive aura of Colette's performance in a period when even "*danseuses nues*" ("naked dancers") in revues were actually covered with veils, accessories and leotards. The first photograph (fig.18) was, as indicated by the hand-written inscription, given by Colette herself to Maurice Chevalier who was part of a spectacle in which she played *La Chair* in 1909 and was charmed by her beauty: "Colette était un splendide échantillon de la belle femme de 1908 ... Un peu trapue, dodue sans graisse indésirable, elle avait le sein … oh tant pis! … le sein le plus appétissant du monde[95]" (Pichois & Brunet 157). Circulated in a private exchange between two artists, this photograph displays an audacity and a freedom that contrasts with the conventionality of Walery's picture. Both of them are nevertheless telling evidence of Colette's new professional orientation: "[en] 1909, Colette Willy est une mime et une actrice reconnue. L'image de l'épouse de Willy s'efface et ses images à elle se multiplient[96]" (Pichois & Brunet 166). From then on, she was no longer in Willy's shadow: not yet an unanimously recognized "*femme de lettres*" ("woman of letters"), she was identified as a "*théâtreuse*" ("a theater woman"). Her incursion into the universe of pantomime and music-hall gave her some familiarity with the performing arts in a time when these were sources of influence for early cinema. As she added a facet to her public professional identity, she confirmed her predisposition for the visual. This moment of her life, as shall be examined in what follows, was to impact

[95] "Colette was a splendid example of the beautiful woman in the year 1908 ... Slightly stocky, plump but without unwelcome fat; her breasts were … Never mind! … the most appetizing breasts in the world."
[96] "[In] 1909, Colette Willy is a recognized mime and actress. The image of Willy's wife fades away but images of her own multiply."

her literary production and her relationship to the cinema. What remains to be assessed nonetheless is to what extent it impacted the fashioning of her auctorial self.

The numerous images depicting Colette as a comedian may well be only exceeded in number by the countless images showing her in the process of writing. Famous photographer Robert Doisneau immortalized her in such a posture in 1950 (fig.20).

fig.20. Colette by Doisneau

Forty years after Walery's shots, Doisneau's picture unambiguously portrays Colette as a writer, notably by including ostentatious signs of authorship in the composition of the photograph: the pen that she holds in her hand and the open, hand-written notebook conventionally identify her as a producer of text. Literary mythology is at work in this portrait as it uses a visual *dispositif* that has been present in visual culture since the medieval period and the spread of frontispieces showing generic representations of the writer. The image is saturated with symbolic visual constituents signifying Colette's literary authenticity and authority. By being photographed in such an iconographic posture, she shows that she fits the role and claims to be recognized as a writer. This is

already a portrait of a living monument of French literature, intertextually reverberating previous comparable portraits of the writer in which she has the same attitude and the same accessories. As my aim is not to trace all the photographic occurrences of Colette in a writing posture, I would like to indicate only two other pictures, one from 1922 (fig.21) and one from 1953 (fig.22), which illustrate the notable continuity in Colettian iconography when it comes to portraying the author in Colette. These pictures, and many more that were made between them, show the same profile, the same slightly bent head and the same writing hand. The staging, whose purpose is "to theatricalize [an] image exterior to the [self]" (Dyer 117), is one of studious, focused and unassuming auctority – somewhat in the spirit of a "Claudine va à l'école" ("Claudine goes to school") scene.

fig. 21. Colette writing in 1922

fig.22. Colette writing in 1953

Compared to the previously mentioned portraits of Colette, these photographs convey a more innocuous and socially acceptable image of the woman who was formerly associated with high-society libertinage, scandalous homosexual affairs and risqué

theatrical performances. What they seek to visually represent is the essence of auctority through the depiction of the elementary, foundational gesture that is at the origin of all literature. Colette's direct look at the camera in the pictures from the 1950s leaves little room for ambiguity though: the writer is aware that she is being observed and photographed, that she is being cast in the role of the writer and that she is expected to embody a sociocultural type. Seeking to make the notion of auctority visible, these portraits set Colette up as a literary icon. The longevity of such a representation in Colette's personal iconography reflects the remarkable longevity of her literary career; but when seen in relation with older, less consensual and less authoritative depictions of her, this proliferating image is also evidence of a change in the way the figure known as "Colette" was considered by the public and constructed by the media. Nobody summed up this change of status as well as Jean Cocteau who commented on the trajectory of her life and reputation as follows: "Scandale sur scandale. Puis tout bascule et elle passe au rang d'idole. Elle achève son existence de pantomimes, d'instituts de beauté, de vieilles lesbiennes dans une apothéose de respectabilité[97]" (Chalon 394). In 1922 (fig.21), Colette was a promising young writer who had already signed a few best-sellers (*La Vagabonde*, *Chéri*); in 1953 (fig.22), she celebrated her eightieth birthday and was a respected and canonized author. In the meantime, she had reached fame and her image, or rather her images, had spread in French collective imagination to the point of becoming a valuable resource for her and the media.

[97] "One scandal after another. Then everything changes and she becomes an idol. She ends her life of music-halls, beauty parlors and old lesbians in an apotheosis of respectability."

“The peculiar nature of literary celebrity” (Moran 9): Colette and the rise of modern celebrity culture

When Colette moved to Paris with Willy, the French capital was perceived as the world’s capital of entertainment. In particular, the city had a reputation for its countless theatrical productions combining a sense of Parisian decadence and literary quality. In “the Mecca of the stage” (Garval, “Broadway” 84), where theaters and *cafés-concerts* (“cafés with a cabaret”) were plentiful (Carou 23-5), actors, actresses and playwrights were very much in the public eye, so much so that these occupations were sought after by those who wanted to stand out. As summarized by Michael Garval, “appearing on the stage remained paramount for achieving and maintaining show business celebrity” (*Cléo* 80). In many respects, and notably the status of its artists, the French turn-of the-century theatrical sphere which Colette was to haunt for many years exemplified the advent of capitalist entertainment industry. The public’s interest in these entertainers prompted the media of the time to capitalize on this curiosity and to multiply the forms in which they could satisfy their curiosity. Gossip columns, reviews, photographs, but also caricatures and, as proved by Colette’s pictures, postcards exploited the public demand while bringing to light the growing fascination with both the public and the private selves of well-known people. Publicity and fame thus became a major stake of media exposure. For Leo Braudy, this unprecedented commercial exploitation of publicity and artistic image was the direct result of the technical improvements applied to means of production and diffusion since the previous century. He further remarks that “the media revolution, which began with photography in the 1830s, forged a [special] bond between machine

and audience, changing the nature of perception" (616). The change in perception affecting people of the entertainment world who achieved uncommon popularity was then at the origin of a new form of cult: centered on the self and on the privileged relation that can grow between an artist and his/her admirers, celebrity culture was being born.

In his history of fame, Braudy also notes that from the moment when the diffusion of portraits became relatively rapid and effortless, it has played a major material role in introducing the famous to the fans (380). Joe Moran shares Braudy's opinion and similarly puts the emphasis on the contiguity between the emergence of celebrity culture and that of large-scale image production as "fame has always been enhanced by the available means of reproducing images" (8). What Braudy and Moran imply is that without the development of mass media, and especially media with visual content, celebrity culture could not have flourished the way it did. Every new development in the world of media brought a stone to the building of favorable conditions for the expansion of celebrity culture by publicizing new standards and new forms of visibility. The media revolution that boosted the expansion of visual culture resulted therefore in the advent of "a new, image-driven brand of celebrity" (Garval, "Broadway" 84), an intensely mediatized celebrity of which Colette's lasting and extensive media visibility is representative. If journalism, and especially the illustrated press, worked in concert with the photographic industry as the main purveyor of celebrity (Garval, "Broadway" 84) when she began to be popular, the invention of the cinema and its subsequent transformation into an industry entailed a paradigm shift: the cinema became not only

one more channel of celebrity but it also established the condition of stardom while confirming the mercantile evolution of celebrity.

As theorized by Edgar Morin and Richard Dyer, the invention of the cinematograph contributed to the rise of modern celebrity culture by inaugurating the star as a sociocultural category. As for Braudy, he formulates the distinction between modern stardom and older celebrity in terms of religion and materiality: for him, the celebrity is associated with a form of achievement that implies social and material success whereas the star has about him/her an aura of spiritual transcendence that encourages fascination and adulation (554). The unique nature of the cinematic representation, blending distance and intimacy while lighting up the screen exacerbates this effect and can trigger processes of fetishism and divinization (Dyer 116, Morin 30) on the part of admirers, or fans, hence the initial identification of stars with actors. Placing the phenomenon of stardom within the vaster socioeconomic context in which it appeared and thrived, Dyer proposes another distinction. Admitting, like Braudy, that there is a divine, "mythical" dimension in the star, he argues that there is also about him/her something less lofty.

One specificity of the star system being to imply the commodification of the self, a star, according to Dyer, is a complex combination of two entities, namely a "star-god(dess) (myth)" and a "star-object (merchandise)" (135). This duality actually has its roots in the very origins of modern celebrity, even before the invention of the cinematograph and its stars. If Dyer rightly describes stars as "the admirable coincidence of myth and capital" (116), I would like to suggest that this aspect was already present in the exaltation of celebrities who were not actors and actresses, before the starification of

silent film performers like Musidora, Mary Pickford, or Rudolph Valentino. The end of the 19th century – with the convergence of visual media growth, of capitalistic values benefitting to material culture and of fetishistic practices linked to the promotion of individual singularity and the satisfaction of a desire for personal recognition – cumulated the sociological, economic, and cultural conditions for the appearance of a star-system that would place celebrities from all walks of life at the intersection of myth (ideal) and capital (merchandising).

With the development of photography and the cinema, images were endowed with a new cultural regime that placed them in a more general "system of symbolic exchange between people, interest groups, cultures [that is] conducted largely … through visual images, both actualized and imagined" – a system that was called "iconomy" by Terry E. Smith (33). His principle of iconomy "[underlines] the central importance to human affairs of the image economy" (2) while opening perspectives on how writers' images may have become vehicles of collective meanings and values associated with literature as much as a means of interacting with the public. What Colette's multiple images indeed show is that writers, like entertainment artists and actors, were affected by the advent of the star-system and visual media fame. They too were the objects of images – images that were circulated in society, included in a collective cultural repertoire and so, constitutive of the iconomy of the period. If Smith stresses the symbolic value of images, Dyer's emphasis on the material capitalistic value of stars and their images urges us to contemplate a more concrete side for the concept of iconomy and to regard it as possibly including a literal "economy of the icon," in the sense of a commerce built around the

images of identifiable, recognized, symbolically-invested cultural figures. It is indeed tempting to use a word like "iconomy" to describe the various commercial activities existing around the image of somebody like Colette during her lifetime.

Unarguably, one major characteristic of celebrities is to be objects of desire crystallizing patterns of fascination and emulation. Processes of projection and identification lead people to want to imitate their favorite celebrities or get products endorsed by them. Richard Dyer named "mimetisms" the "practical identifications" by which stars "guide our manners, gestures, poses, attitudes" (136) and influence our behavior as consumers. For Dyer, the way stars determine fashions and attitudes is part and parcel of celebrity culture. Predictably, the ferments of what Garval calls "our modern celebrity copycat culture" ("Broadway", 94) are already perceptible in Colette's time and even in her career. The success of her first books thus caused the emergence of a real "Claudine iconomy", on levels both symbolic (identification) and commercial (merchandising). On the symbolic level, the story was adapted for the stage and the character entered French collective imagination: Colette had created a type (*ABCdaire* 44). The 1902 postcard examined earlier testifies to the almost absolute identification that was to lastingly unite the author and her character but Claudine also inspired mimetic attitudes in other young women of the time, anonymous and famous[98] alike, who, unlike Colette, had no vested interest in popularizing the character. Decades before De Certeau and Jenkins conceptualized it, the Claudine craze thus fostered forerunning practices of

[98] According to Pichois and Brunet, Colette called them "des aspirantes-Claudine" ("aspiring-Claudine", 90). Allegedly, actresses Musidora and Polaire, who played the character onstage, were among them.

textual poaching. On the commercial level, the craving for imitation and the popularity of the heroine motivated mercantile uses of her name for products as varied as her characteristic white collar, perfume, ice-cream, photographic paper or even cigarettes.

Such unrestrained merchandising that included both Colette's and Claudine's images in the same economico-imaginary iconomy was to become a banal aspect of the star system that later throve in twentieth-century Western cultures. The phenomenon has been mostly associated with movie stars but almost overlooked when concerning writers as though, their sociocultural status being perceived as incompatible with commercial activities, it were a taboo for them to engage in activities of self-publicity through the promotion of products, related or not to their writings. "On reprochait à Colette de trahir l'écriture pour le commerce[99]" (Pichois & Brunet 326). This statement illustrates the discomfort that Colette's proximity with advertising and commerce caused. The texts compiled in *Le Second métier de l'écrivain* are evidence of her many contacts with advertising in her career: Lanvin, Hermès, Perrier, Ford or Lucky Strikes count among the brands for which she wrote texts to be generally published in magazines. In the preface, Frédéric Maget explains: "Le texte de Colette est souvent reproduit en fac-similé (son écriture aux lignes courbes et sa signature manuscrite sont identifiées par tous). Un portrait … l'accompagne. C'est autant la personne que l'écrivain qu'on met en avant. Quand elle ne donne pas un texte, elle prête son nom ou son image[100]" (19). Like the

[99] "Colette was blamed for betraying literature in favor of commerce"

[100] "Colette's text is often reproduced in facsimile (her curvy writing and her signature are identified by everyone). A portrait … is also there. It is as much the person as the writer who is drawn attention to. When she does not give a text, she lends her name or image"

Claudine postcards or Doisneau's picture, this was just another form of staging for the author known as "Colette".

Because advertising has clearly been associated with mercantilism more than with the art of writing, it has always had ambiguous relationships with the literary field. Many well-known writers in Colette's time (Louise de Vilmorin, Jean Cocteau, Sacha Guitry, Paul Valéry, etc.) actually penned texts and slogans for brands but were very discreet about this necessary bread-and-butter work. Colette was far more comfortable with participating in the rise of promotional culture. "Contrairement à nombre d'intellectuels qui se prennent pour des esprits purs, Colette n'avait aucun préjugé contre le commerce[101]" Pichois and Brunet conclude (327), underlining a personality trait that she fully expressed when she set out to open a beauty parlor in Paris in 1932. It is on this occasion that she posed in her shop for an advertising photograph on which she wrote: "Etes-vous pour ou contre le "second métier" de l'écrivain?[102]" (fig.23). When, in the course of the 1920s and 1930s, some of her colleagues enjoined her to resume her literary job because, as a writer, "sur une seule tâche [elle devait] mourir ou vivre[103]" (Colette, *Second* 7), she energetically defended her point of view, calling for the public's support and writing articles, like "Avatars" published by *Vogue* magazine, in which she reminded her detractors that she had never fully devoted herself to writing and writing only. To those who had a short memory, she gave a summary of her c*urriculum vitae*: before or while writing, she had been a mime, a comedian, a journalist … Colette's eager

[101]"Unlike many intellectuals who think of themselves as pure spirits, Colette had no anti-commerce bias."
[102]"Are you in favor or against the writer's 'second occupation'?""
[103] "She must live and die working on the same task."

implication in diverse activities, including primarily lucrative activities, may have been due to the memory of her parents' bankruptcy or her fear of being in need of money, but her desire for independence was certainly paramount in inspiring this diversity.

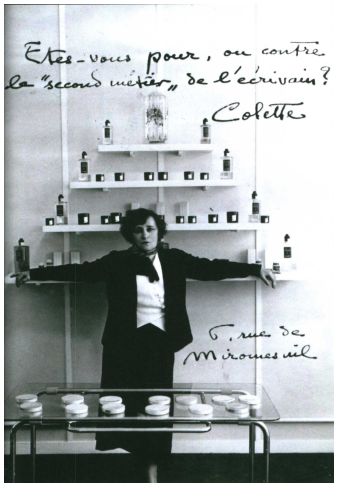

fig.23. Colette in her beauty parlor

After the publication of *Chéri* in 1920, Colette's literary talent was definitively recognized: her signature was worth gold and solicitations abounded, from brands as well as from newspapers or even publishers, who asked her to recommend their writers in her various writings. Even though the literary world was overall reluctant to compromise with commerce, it was willing to solicit its celebrities for its own publicity. One reason was that Colette's image gradually came to include one particular facet that was to bring together publicity and literature quite unexpectedly. Colette's public literary recognition gave her a legitimacy that made her a reliable prescriber, notably when it came to give opinions and advice to women as Maget underscores: "Elle est aussi devenue … celle qui s'adresse aux femmes, qui les conseille. Le public, comme les directeurs de journaux et de magazines, la considère comme un auteur sachant se faire entendre des femmes …

Elle est celle qui sait[104]" (Colette, *Second* 17 & 19). This aspect of Colette's celebrity is important because this legitimacy partly determines her auctorial posture when she writes advertising texts or spectacle reviews, including movie reviews. Indeed, when she writes about Abel Gance's *Mater Dolorosa* in 1917, she does nothing but publicize or "sell" the movie to her readers. Even though she occasionally used her talent and celebrity to sell products, to advertise plays or movies, or simply to promote her own works, she enjoyed cultural legitimacy. In this respect, Colette embodies both the myth/merchandise duality seen by Dyer as inherent to stars and the ambivalence characterizing literary fame.

Dyer claims that celebrities "incarnate a new elite" that "proposes a new ethics of individuality" (142). This appears to be particularly true for writers. The nineteenth-century "consecration of the writer" in Bénichou's words propagated a notion of the writer as an extraordinary being standing apart in society. They benefitted from a process of individualization that presupposed the existence of special personal gifts connected to expression and storytelling. Braudy thus explains that literary fame was often perceived as superior to other kinds of celebrity because it implied the possession of cultural knowledge (4). "Culturally authoritative" but also commercially capitalizable, writers, after the 19th century, definitely "represent both cultural capital and marketable commodity" (6). In Bourdieu's words, they "tend to straddle the divide between the restricted and extended subfields of cultural production" (Moran 7). Celebrity authors like Colette are therefore ambivalent figures. After the changes that affected the literary

[104] "She also became … the one who speaks to women and advises them. The public, as well as the newspaper and magazine editors, regard her as an author who knows how to make her voice heard by women … She is the one who knows."

market in the 19th century it was no longer enough for writers to be a locus of cultural and intellectual authority if they wanted to succeed. To reach literary fame, they had to take into account this reformulation of authorship. As far as Colette is more precisely concerned, this duality was further complicated by what Garval, describing the same situation in relation to Cléo de Mérode, analyzes as "a combination of notoriety and respectability that [prefigured] the paradoxical public personas of many female film stars [later]" ("Broadway" 81). Colette's fame was therefore doubly anchored in paradoxical duality, bringing together literary talent and commercial viability on the one hand; and the scandalous notoriety of her young years and the ladylike respectability of her older years, on the other hand – two aspects that her representations in visual media conveyed. In this sense, she cumulated a generic trait inherent to her artistic status and an individualizing trait contributing to her auctorial singularity.

Even before the invention of marketing, Colette's first husband, Willy, taught her a crucial lesson, namely that modern visual media could and should be used for self-publicity. She learnt her lesson well and cultivated her own sense of the power of images all along her career. As though she deliberately ignored the "tensions in the production of literary celebrity between the legitimacy of culture and the less ambiguous sanction of the marketplace" (Moran 6), she embraced the ambivalence and diversity that being a writer in her time could offer. In a previously mentioned passage, Maget specifies "elle est *aussi* devenue … celle qui s'adresse aux femmes" (my emphasis); Pichois & Brunet similarly

notes: “Mime, danseuse, actrice, Colette est *aussi* auteur[105]” (164, my emphasis). Such identifications indicate that Colette’s auctorial identity is significantly cumulative. Diverse and atypical, her auctorial posture gives a precious insight into the cultural and visual context of her time, when “the world became more attuned to varieties of public display” (Braudy 27) and “the synergetic interconnections between books and other kinds of media became greater” (Moran 40). Her relation with visual media illustrates how literary celebrity truly became an intertextual and transmedia phenomenon involving more than literature and writers. The rest of this chapter consequently explores this sociohistorical development by examining the representation of Colette’s auctority in three different areas of her career that are all linked with cinema: her articles about cinema, her contribution to Max Ophuls’s movie *Divine* and her appearance in Bellon’s documentary *Colette*. Complementing her photographic portraits, these cinematographic experiences will certainly confirm what various articles announcing Keira Knightley’s future impersonation of the writer repeatedly stressed, namely, Colette’s status as an “iconic” French writer (Ritman, “Berlin”, Tetteh, “Another”).

[105] “She *also* became … the one who speaks to women…”; “A mime, a dancer and an actress … Colette is *also* an author.”

COLETTE AT THE MOVIES: THE AUTHOR AS SPECTATOR AND CRITIC

Chronicling the beginnings of a medium

"Nous avons vu naître un art. L'aventure est assez extraordinaire pour qu'elle nous demande de réfléchir … Nous connaissons les Thespis du cinéma et leurs œuvres. Avant qu'elles n'aient tout à fait disparu de la mémoire des contemporains, c'est à les décrire que tâche à s'employer le présent livre[106]." So begins Maurice Bardèche and Robert Brasillach's 1935 *Histoire du cinéma* which was among the first histories of the medium to be published in France. Here, the authors compare the situation of those who witnessed the invention of the cinema to that of the ancient Greeks who lived through the historic time when theatrical plays were created and Thespis was allegedly the first actor playing a character onstage. Their point is to highlight a major difference between the emergence of theater and the invention of cinema: whereas no first-hand testimony has survived for the first, the existence of media enabling the recording of such events in our age (print, photography, radio, etc.) has made it possible to chronicle the beginnings of new technologies. Seventy years later, Daniel Banda and José Moure, in the foreword of their anthology, obviously remember Bardèche and Brasillach's introductory statement:

> Aucun des arts immémoriaux n'a eu de témoin de sa naissance. Le premier dessin, le premier pas de danse, le premier chant : tout cela est depuis toujours tombé dans l'oubli. Le secret s'est perdu. Aucun Gorki n'a pu commenter le premier théâtre d'ombres … aucun Tolstoï n'a dit la merveille d'un art naissant. Pour le cinéma, nous avons leur témoignage. Il reste pourtant souvent inconnu[107]. (19)

[106]"We witnessed the birth of an art. The adventure is extraordinary enough for us to think about it … We know the Thepsises of cinema and their works. This book aims to describe them before they have completely vanished from the memories of contemporaries."

[107] "None of the immemorial arts had witnesses to record the moment of their birth. The first drawing, the first dance step, the first song: all this has forever been forgotten. The secret has been lost. No Gorki has

Their book is a collection of rare testimonies in which the discovery of cinema and its polemical recognition as an art is narrated and analyzed by intellectuals, journalists, novice cinematographers, but also writers. Besides Méliès, Abel Gance, Louis Delluc, or Freud, authors like Frank Norris, Gorki, Kafka and… Colette thus share their memories of and thoughts about the origins of cinema.

As stated by Banda and Moure, "depuis sa naissance, le cinéma a toujours été « parlé[108] »", which does not mean so much that cinema has always included speech (although not necessarily audible) as that it has, from the start, inspired speeches (descriptions, criticisms, theories, etc.) which are now as many direct, contemporaneous accounts of the birth and subsequent evolution of a medium. All these testimonies form the backbone of the early history of cinema and, while they offer countless perspectives on its lively infancy, they particularly call attention to the mechanism of reception. Like photography in its time, the cinematograph challenged established aesthetic and artistic notions. At first hardly more than a fairground attraction, the new form of spectacle rapidly showed outstanding potentialities for telling stories and representing fictive worlds; and almost as rapidly it became a fast-growing industry. The immediate evolution of the medium in the direction of the now established polarity art/industry placed it in close proximity to other media that were already structured by the same dichotomy, namely, photography and literature. That is why, Alain Carou purports, it is crucial to "identifier précisément les emprunts que le cinéma primitif fait à des champs

---

commented on the first shadow theater … No Tolstoy has formulated the wonder of an art that is being born. For the cinema, we have their testimonies. However, they often remain unknown."

[108] "Since its birth, the cinema has always been « talked of »."

culturels déjà structurés, et analyser les modalités de leur réélaboration et de leur contribution à son évolution historique propre[109]" (16). My approach in what follows is therefore modeled on Banda and Moure's as well as Carou's works which explore the contribution of writers to cinema, notably to demonstrate that "les rapports initiaux du cinéma avec le champ littéraire participent d'une manière essentielle de … l'accession à un statut culturel propre pour ce nouveau spectacle[110]" (Carou 14). I shall first consider Colette's writings about the cinema in which she chronicled the infancy and coming of age of the medium, assuming that such writings indeed contributed to make it what it is.

Unlike what happened with photography, the pioneers of the cinematographic technique rarely left written traces of their experimentations. The testimonies that have survived rather deal with the effects produced by the cinematograph on spectators. The accounts are consequently laden with descriptions, reactions and impressions. Some attempts at theorizing the aesthetic and narrative particularities of the medium can occasionally be found and so can similar attempts at rationalizing the representational impact that such an innovation could have; but, overall, the chroniclers of the beginnings of cinema insisted on two aspects in particular: the power of the cinematic spectacle and the remarkable potentialities and attractive promises it encapsulated. Among these chroniclers, writers appear more particularly to often voice aesthetic and artistic concerns that exceed the limits of what is still only an entertaining technical invention.

---

[109] "Identify precisely what primitive cinema borrowed from cultural fields that were already structured and to analyze the modalities of their re-elaboration and of their contribution to its own historical evolution."

[110] "The initial relations of cinema with the literary field partook in an essential manner of … this new spectacle's accession to a cultural status of its own."

> Les questions du poète, de l'homme de théâtre, de l'écrivain ou du peintre sur les possibilités du nouveau médium s'adressent tout autant à leur propre pratique qu'au cinéma lui-même : le cinéma étant l'occasion, pour un autre discours artistique, de repenser son dispositif dans l'ordre de l'imaginaire, à partir du modèle cinématographique[111]. (Banda & Moure 22)

If there is a tendency in writers to consider the arrival of cinema in French culture through the prism of their own art, it is because there is apprehension among them that, like photography in the past, the visual feats of the cinematograph may in the end modify the public's expectations in terms of representation and challenge literature's endeavor to create the illusion of life. One exemplary reaction is Jules Claretie's 1896 article in *Le Temps* in which this member of the *Académie française* and manager of the *Théâtre Français*, although he concedes his fascination for this "machine à transposer la vie" ("life-transposing machine") which presents an astonishing spectacle, denies it any artistic value at this stage of its existence (Banda & Moure 42-3). He worries, however, about the future of his own art: what will be the significance and appeal of theater if or when the cinematograph can simultaneously offer to the public moving photographs, color and sound? A professional of the theater and a writer like Claretie, Colette, by contrast, does not seem to worry about the impact that the cinema could have on the literary field, whether on literature or on theater.

In most of her writings, she does not worry, but marvels; and when she does worry, it is principally about the future of cinema, about what it could achieve, or how it could improve. If Colette examines cinema's first steps through the prism of her literary

[111] "The questions of the poet, the man of the theater, the writer or the painter about the possibilities of the new medium are as much about their own practice as about cinema itself, which, for other artistic discourses, becomes an occasion to reconsider their systems in the order of imagination in the light of the cinematographic model."

and theatrical experience, she does not do so in order to ponder the metaphysical and theoretical scope of the invention of the cinematograph but to appraise its achievements with the critical eye of a spectator who, like Baudelaire with photography, has knowledge and experience in visual spectacles. She tends to focus on concrete aspects of cinema, on what can be seen on the screen and on how these effects are produced. There is technicity and industry in Colette's writings on the cinema as well as wonder and impressionism. If, as Musidora claimed, Colette was one of the first great cinema authors (Virmaux 320), it is not only because she wrote texts *for* the cinema but also because she wrote *about* the cinema. By writing pieces on "le ciné", as it was then called, as soon as 1914, she participated in the emergence of film criticism in the 1910s in France and, in doing so, took on the role of an historian of cinema.

As early as 1917, the future great film critic Louis Delluc, writing an introduction to Colette's text "L'Envers du cinema", saluted her exceptional implication in the promotion of the medium and in shrinking the distance between literature and cinema:

> Vous vous plaignez du mépris où les écrivains français tiennent le cinéma en général ?... Ne vaut-il pas mieux ne fraterniser avec la littérature que par une demi-douzaine de talents clairvoyants ? Ainsi le goût moderne et la subtilité extraordinaire de Mme Colette ont abordé le cinéma avec une compréhension intense … Elle est une preuve complète de l'attirance et du but artistique du ciné. Sa curiosité l'a poussée moins que son intelligence sensible. Elle a écrit dans *Le Film* des pages qui resteront pour leur expérience et leur divination presque cruelle[112]… (Pichois & Brunet 230).

---

112 "You complain about the scorn that French writers generally have for the cinema?... Is it not better to only fraternize with half a dozen clear-sighted talented minds from literature? In this way, Mrs Colette's modern taste et extraordinary subtlety considered cinema with complete understanding … She is living evidence of the appeal and of the artistic end of cinema. Her curiosity less than her intelligent sensitivity guided her. She wrote pages in *Le Film* that will be remembered for their knowledge and their almost cruel gift of divination."

After Colette's death, the same Louis Delluc was one of the rare commentators to praise and even remember her early trailblazing enthusiasm for cinema: "J'aurais aimé que l'unanimité des hommages adressés à Colette fût parachevée de ceux du cinéma … Auraient-ils oublié que Mme Colette découvrit l'art cinématographique au moment même où bien peu de Français y songeaient … Allons, messieurs du cinéma, saluez un maître[113]" (Pichois & Brunet 231). Characteristically, Colette's texts include the technical considerations that used to be the core of the criticisms (or rather evaluative reports) presented in photography magazines at the very start of the commercial exploitation of the cinematograph as well as more subjective remarks revealing her personal reception of the film by which she means to address and relate to the public. Very soon also, she mentions anecdotes from film shootings. As she placed herself in the previously nonexistent position of film critic and improvised accordingly an original first-time discourse on the medium, Colette actually laid the foundations of film criticism as we still know it today.

She started to write on cinema so to speak "professionally" in 1914, that is, almost twenty years after the first public exhibition of the Lumière cinematograph. Her personal relationship with the cinema nevertheless started much earlier. A short, previously unpublished text was included by Alain and Odile Virmaux in their book (31) which recounts, as they word it, Colette's "révélation … de ce qu'on allait appeler le cinéma à travers l'une de ces multiples inventions en « scope » qui ont jalonné le dix-neuvième

113 "I wish that the unanimous tributes to Colette were completed by tributes coming from the cinema … Can they have forgotten that Mrs Colette discovered the art of cinema when few French people cared about it … Come on, gentlemen from the cinema, bow before a master."

siècle[114]" (Virmaux 30). The invention in question is Thomas Edison's kinetoscope that was shown in Paris between 1894 and 1896 when Colette arrived in the capital. What she describes in these few lines, which have been estimated to date from the1940s, is then her encounter with a visual phenomenon whose growth she also was to witness. Colette writes of the cinema as of a living creature, a travel companion that was by her side for most of her life ("il n'arrive pas à me détacher de lui", "it has not been possible for me to detach myself from it"). Immobilized by the painful effects of arthrosis, she sees in cinema her last resort to explore the world: "comme il est ma dernière curiosité, il sera mon dernier voyage terrestre[115]," shee writes as though she anticipated the cinematographic frenzy that was to mark her last years and bring her to travel in her past, whether by adapting her past works or by inviting her to talk about her life in reports and documentaries.

She does not mention her own participation in its history but truly positions herself as a recipient, an observer and spectator of "a miracle". Echoing Bardeche and Brasillach's claim, she boasts in her first sentence "*J'ai* vu naître le cinéma" ("*I* witnessed the birth of cinema," my emphasis), and then describes how a mechanically animated image showed a dancing girl to the viewer. A tale of the origins, Colette's text is a reminder that before being a collectively enjoyed public exhibition on a screen, the cinema had, for a short while, been a private lonely experience. "Il *était* tout petit au fond

114 "Revelation … of what was to be called cinema through one of these countless inventions ending in « scope » that punctuated the nineteenth century."
115 "Being my last curiosity, it will be my last terrestrial travel."

d'une boîte noire[116]" (my emphasis) she remembers, implying that it was not to last as it would later benefit from big screen projections while anticipating the situation of the modern spectator who, being one among others, is plunged into darkness. In this text that starts like a memory, progresses like a historical account and ends like a declaration of love, Colette mixes personal remembrances and almost a historian's point of view on a moment that was often eclipsed by the exciting Lumière projection that was declared the official birth of the cinema. Not content with establishing film criticism as a legitimate literary activity, she contributed to keeping the memory of cinema's prehistory alive.

As stated earlier, Colette witnessed cinema's first steps: its gestation, its birth, its growth as an entertainment industry but also one of its major transformations in the advent of talking films. As soon as the existence of the cinematograph was publicized, there were hopes that the technique would soon be combined with another that would allow the simultaneous diffusion of sound. For Banda and Moure, it is the very initial conception of cinema as much as its actual technical development that called for the addition of sound: "l'idée cinématographique est identifiée à la représentation totale de la réalité et à la restitution d'une illusion parfaite. Ainsi, le cinéma est d'abord conçu avec le son – comme une extension du phonographe[117]" (35). Before the appearance of the cinematograph that made the recording and projection of moving images possible, there was indeed Edison's phonograph that made the recording and reproduction of sound possible as soon as 1877. Like the cinematograph, the phonograph had several

116 "It *was* really small at the bottom of a black box."
117 "The idea of cinema is identified with the total representation of reality and the rendering of a perfect illusion. Accordingly, cinema is first conceived as with sound – like an extension of the phonograph."

predecessors (such as Scott de Martinville's 1857 phonautograph) in the attempt to record sound but it was the first device to successfully record sound *and* reproduce the recorded sound. It also had several successors trying to improve the technique, or to couple it with the recording of images. Edison's Kinetophone (1895), Auguste Baron's Graphonoscope (1899) or Bethon, Dusaud and Jaubert's Phonorama (1899) (Icart 10) counted among the first attempts but never really proved fruitful due to their complexity or their cost. It is now well-known history that the world had to wait until the 1820s to see and hear the first "talkie". After a series of shorts including synchronized dialogue and a remarkable 1926 projection of a film presenting opera extracts and a movie with a musical sequence (Alan Crosland's *Don Juan*), the Warner brothers released in October 1927 *The Jazz Singer*, a feature-length movie made with the same recording sound-on-disc device, known as "Vitaphone", that enabled synchronized sound and the inclusion of songs (Icart 14). After *The Jazz Singer* cinema was never the same: within a few years, the decline of the silent film era radically changed the destiny of cinema and its status.

During this period, Colette had already stopped contributing regularly to the publication *Le Film* so that she did not immediately shared her view on sound films. After the "Musidora years," she was confronted to some kind of disaffection coming from the cinema people: "le cinéma me dédaigne," ("the cinema disregards me", Virmaux 372) she complained in 1930 to the critic Lucien Wahl. Despite her effort to let these people know that she would gladly work with them, they turned a deaf ear to her appeals; but then, after 1930, "rien de pareil" ("nothing was the same"): "on lui demande des adaptations plus nombreuses, des collaborations fragmentaires, des travaux sur

mesure; on réclame sa caution; on fait appel au grand écrivain pour que sa plume et son renom valorisent une marchandise hétérogène[118]" (Virmaux 24). It was the beginning of a second period of close relationships with cinema for the writer; but, in the meantime, the medium had changed and Colette disclosed publicly what she thought about its latest development. Her verdict is unambiguous: "le cinéma parlé" ("spoken cinema") as she prefers to call it does not display the same charm as silent cinema; and her opinion is not better when it comes to color, albeit she did not communicate as much on the subject. The reading of her article "Noir et blanc" (Virmaux 420-22), for example, nonetheless reveals how much she dreaded a widespread use of color in movies that would entail "une trahison [des] couleurs naturelles" ("a betrayal of natural colors") and the spread of a chromatic monotony that would be detrimental to the expression of the artistic character of the medium or of the characters' psychology according to her: "le blanc, le noir, leurs combinaisons et leurs contrastes infinis nous démontrent, chaque jour, qu'ils acceptent admirablement l'arbitraire, c'est-à-dire l'intervention de l'art humain … Que deviendront les contrastes saisissants d'ombre et de lumière, qui sont des commentaires psychologiques d'une incomparable éloquence[119]?"

Colette expressed her regrets concerning the arrival of sound in films in two interviews that she gave in 1929 and 1931, respectively in *Revue de Paris* and in *Pour vous*. Her argument against sound cinema is that the presence of sound and speech

118 "She is asked to produce more adaptations, some fragmentary collaborations, customized works; or to give backing. The great writer that she is is requested to use her pen and fame to increase the value of heterogeneous merchandises."

119 "White, black, their infinite combinations and contrasts show us every day that admirably work with the arbitrary nature of human artistic intervention … What will become of the striking contrasting plays between light and shade which are as many psychological comments of incomparable eloquence?"

particularly reveals the poverty of dialogues, the barrenness of scripts, the dullness of humor (Virmaux 385) and the ridiculousness and unpleasantness of microphone-amplified sounds. Overall, she points to the technical flaws and lack of achievement of a technology that is still trying to find its bearings. In so doing, she recurrently compares sound cinema with theatre only to underline how the former only reproduces the failures of low quality drama: "déjà le cinéma s'arroge les erreurs du mauvais théâtre … Le cinématographe porte à son passif, depuis deux ou trois ans, plus de fautes de goût que n'en commit, en quatre lustres, le théâtre[120]" (Virmaux 384). For Colette, sound cinema can be entertaining but it cannot have the same impact on the spectators' minds as silent cinema because it gives too much to hear and represent too directly the banality of "sounds that are not worth hearing" (Virmaux 386). Like Baudelaire before her, Colette summons imagination to explain her position: "je déplore qu'en faisant parler les images, les cinéastes aient supprimé la part de notre imagination qui a besoin de s'exercer et souffre d'être blessée[121]" (Virmaux 385). By claiming that the addition was useless and detrimental to the suggestive and fascinating power of cinema, she not only adopts the posture of the critic but also aligns herself with spectators who are faced with this new feature of cinema. She defines herself as a demanding spectator who has been used to being entertained by theater and silent cinema and who cannot be simply impressed by some technological feat. There is too much noise and not enough silence in "cinema parlé" according to Colette: such an extravagant use of sound dulls images by making

[120] "The cinema displays the mistakes of bad theater … The cinematograph, for two or three years, has made more errors of taste than the theatre in four decades."
[121] "I deplore that, as they made images talk, cinematographers hampered the part of our imagination that needs to be used and consequently suffers from being hurt."

them appear too real. To paraphrase Walter Benjamin, images with inappropriate sound are, for her, deprived of their aura.

Colette's negativity towards sound cinema can appear surprising. She, who valued "the spectacle of life in all its forms" above all else (Virmaux 365), should have enjoyed the unprecedented lively depiction of life that sound cinema made possible. However, she voiced a highly critical opinion of sound cinema that she was not the only one to hold. Alain and Odile Virmaux contend that her dissatisfaction can be interpreted as reflecting a more widespread generational reaction that betrays the defiance roused by the technological and economic evolution of cinema in people who had witnessed its birth and had placed high hopes in it (25). For many of them, the advent of sound marked the end of a golden age in which silent movies had reached the highest stage of their artistic capacities (Marie 6). Roger Icart demonstrated that the detractors of sound cinema were not so rare (131-207): this concern and rejection were soon muted by the colossal success of sound cinema but they modified the attitude of some of the early enthusiasts who had already perceived in cinema the promise of "a new art, rich with infinite potentialities" (Virmaux 23). For Colette, it meant taking some relative distance with cinema at the very moment when cinema made her new proposals. To some extent, the relationship got reversed: "désormais c'est le cinéma – devenu parlant – qui va vers elle, au lieu qu'elle allait vers le muet … elle contribue par l'écriture au fonctionnement du système, elle n'oriente plus par l'écriture son évolution[122]" (Virmaux 24). After 1930 and the definitive

[122] "From then on, it was the cinema – which had been equipped with sound – that went to her whereas she would go to silent cinema … she contributed with her writing to the functioning of the system but she no longer directed its evolution through her writing."

imposition of sound cinema on the cultural scene, Colette gradually moved away from the posture of film critic giving accounts on the avant-garde developments of an art-to-be to actually take an active part in the writing of films. In this way, she fully embraced her initial status as a writer, a creator whose primary preoccupations (and creative materials) are language, storytelling and dialogues for fictional purposes.

"L'envers du cinéma" ("The other side of cinema")

Colette's writings on cinema are remarkable for their association of subjective judgments and more technical considerations. The writer regularly takes her readers behind the screen, inviting them to wonder how what they watch on it is created and to take note of the specific achievements or failures of the movies that she reviews. Having entered the field of journalism in 1911, she wrote her first two articles on cinema in 1914, then a third in 1916. Following the success of these articles, the newly-founded specialized magazine *Le Film* offered her to be in charge of the weekly section devoted to movie reviews. Her collaboration with *Le Film* lasted three months only and for the rest of her career she elected the less constraining form of the "libre chronique" (Virmaux 283), that is, occasional free-lance texts that she would sell to various publications. Such sporadic contributions guaranteed her some independence and the assurance of being able to keep "une légère distance" ("a slight distance", Virmaux 331). As soon as 1914, her first article on cinema, perceptive and fairly singular in nature, announced Colette's

lasting interest in the conditions of production of cinematic works and her very personal perspective on the medium.

This first article is simply entitled “Le Ciné” (Virmaux 285-6). As Colette herself specifies this is a professionals’ term, “l’argot du cinématographe” (“the cinematograph slang”) with which only initiates are familiar for the moment (Virmaux 335). Colette immediately sets the tone: she is going to take the readers backstage, as though they were professionals themselves and to initiate them into the manufacturing secrets of a movie. She was to use the same method for her article “L’Envers du cinéma” published in *Femina* in September 1917 (Virmaux 331-38) in which she recounts her visit to the Italian set of *La Vagabonde*. To unveil “l’envers du cinéma”, she puts herself in the shoes of a guide as she visits the “usine cinématographique” (“the cinema factory”) where films are being shot. She is thus the eyes and the ears of the readers but, unlike them, she is already some sort of initiate as she already has some experience in being part of the entertainment world and consequently knows some of the basic tricks of the trade. She is not just any reporter discovering a professional environment but a former music-hall artist in familiar territory. She knows where to look and how to interpret what she sees. She notices meaningful details that reveal a lot about the situation of cinema at the time. Maybe because she had a visual prejudice towards theatricality or because, in the 1910s, the cinema really had a marked theatrical look, her description of the shooting stresses the artificiality and the theatricality of what can be perceived on the set. In a way, Colette demystifies the cinematographic image as she mentions, in her first article, the cardboard grass and rocks, the imitation marble, and, more generally, the overall fakeness of the set.

She also describes, in both texts, the exaggeratedly bright light and make-up that give actors their incomparable look and cinematographic aura. She thus brings to light the artifice in cinema that relates it to the world of theater she knows so well.

If the shooting of a film on a set is in itself a spectacle with various attractions and numbers (Virmaux 332), it often looks like a circus in Colette's descriptions. Every contributor to the shooting is an artist of a different kind: there are, for instance, the "vedette," the "femme-canon" and the "jeune premier" ("the star", "the lady cannonball" and "the young novice") in "L'Envers du cinéma," not to mention the lionesses and their tamer in "Le Ciné." The team on the set is then regarded as a true theatrical or circus company. Colette pays homage to their hard labor and their professionalism and so alludes to the growing professionalization of cinema that is no longer a mere scientific miracle (Banda & Moure 43) but a flourishing entertainment industry. One scene in "Le Ciné" particularly stresses the evolution of the medium and of the professions that it conceived to exist. The author reports a dialogue between two little girls who are already cinema actresses: they talk about their career and the preparatory work for auditions and they display the cold self-confidence and blasé attitude of long-time professionals. Here, Colette anticipates the phenomenon of the cinema child-star growing up too rapidly and using an adult language that is not appropriate. One of the girls indeed concludes: "J'avais bien besoin de me faire tant de bile! … J'ai été engagée sur ma figure, ma chère, sur ma figure[123]!" Such precocious awareness of the importance of physical appearance

[123] "How useless it was for me to worry myself sick! … I was hired because of my face, my dear, because of my face!"

confirms what Colette suggests elsewhere through various details, namely that visuality and the spectacular are paramount in cinema. She will again insist on his idea, as previously mentioned, when she rejects the advent of sound as useless and harmful to the suggestiveness and beauty of cinematic images.

In the future, Colette was to confirm her predilection for the visuality of cinema. In her reviews, she rarely recounts stories but considers, again and again, the movies' sets and their decorative features. The aestheticism of a trinket, the quality of furniture or the munificence of accessories always catch her attention and are the opportunity for her to remind her readers of the materiality of cinema: let us not forget that the image projected on the screen is an illusion of life *re-created* by means of real objects. Years before Roland Barthes, Colette had therefore the intuition of "the reality effect" even though she applied it to cinematic texts instead of literary texts. She shows the same interest in clothes and fashions, going as far as devoting a whole article to "Le Cinématographe et la mode" in 1917. In this article, she mockingly demonstrates how an incongruous detail in a costume ruins the dramatic effect of the end of an Italian movie (Virmaux 496). More seriously, she analyzes how the choice of specific garments is flattering or harmful to actresses and their performance on the screen. If Colette pays attention to the visual effects produced by some tangible objects within the cinematic image, she also wonders about how these objects showed on the screen to a mass of spectators more and more exposed to celebrity culture can have an impact in reality. In an era when product placement had not yet been established as an inevitable commercial presence, Colette, who always kept an eye on financial matters whether they concerned copyright or wages

for her journalism pieces, already raised the question of the relationships between brands and the cinema. In "Le Cinématographe et la mode", she is surprised that the cinema has not (yet) generated its own fashions and exported them in the exterior world while underscoring that if fashion designers have so far used the cinematographic screen as an incomparable advertising medium, none of them has (yet) been able to really design creations that live up to the phenomenal potential of the cinema. As a professional of show business, Colette had a keen eye for the material environment of movie settings because her six years of experience in music-halls had taught her the importance of sets and costumes in staging a spectacle. Also, as an individual, Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette was, as it has constantly been emphasized by her biographers, a sensual materialist, a lover of life and pleasures, including the aesthetic pleasure provided by the sight of beauties, whether natural or man-made.

"Plus je les regarde … plus je les estime les acteurs de cinéma[124]" (Phelps 220). Her comments on the visuality of cinematographic objects were surpassed only by her love of actors and actresses, to whom she devoted many entire articles and as many passages in movie reviews. Unsurprisingly, she was very interested in the image that they projected on the screen, worrying about Mae West's weight loss (Virmaux 425) or extolling Bette's Davis's presence and look (Virmaux 427). Colette, in her writings on actors, interrogates the notion of *photogénie* or *cinégénie*, that is, the mysterious power by which the cinematic image transfigures actors and actresses and reveals something special or unexpected in them. Thus, Colette writes, Bette Davis is "barely pretty" but she

124 "The more I watch film actors … the more I like them."

has the power of becoming beautiful and incandescent on the screen: "Bette Davis gouverne, décolore, éteint tout ce qui l'entoure[125]" (Virmaux 427). By assessing the photogenic quality and the expressivity of actors, the writer examines how the cinematographic self of actors expresses itself mostly visually. Without any naivety, she interrogates the relation between actors and their images on the screen in a period of burgeoning star-system. She takes into account the contribution of artifice and techniques such as make-up and light but is nonetheless fascinated by the visual achievements of the cinematographic technology that adds or reveals qualities hardly perceptible in real life. She was nonetheless not tricked or fooled by easy explanations: the actors' appeal exposed on the screen has nothing to do with beauty or an acting technique; it is rather the result of the meeting of an individuality and a technology. Without naming it, Colette calls attention to the phenomenon of *cinégénie* which, prolonging that of *photogénie* inaugurated by the invention of photography in the previous century, was to participate too in the overwhelming development of celebrity culture and even star system and to help some privileged professionals of the cinema to access the status of icon.

Having a predilection for the most visual aspects of cinema, Colette sometimes incorporated more technical considerations in her writings. In her review of the movie *Civilisation* (Virmaux 293-5), she analyzes how the "frenetic" editing gives the impression of tumult and ubiquity. Similarly, in the *Outrage* article, she mentions two other editing particularities to be found in the eponymous movie that she reviews, "une mode ingénieuse de médaillons où s'isole et se vit une scène indépendante de la scène

125 "Bette Davis causes everything around her to submit, lose color and fade."

principale[126]" and the newly introduced shot/countershot technique (Virmaux 486). Although she always claimed that she understood nothing of the technicalities of cinema, Colette, in these instances, proves again that she can, at times, write like a theorist of cinema, describing and appraising its capacities and achievements as a medium. Such remarks, just like her observation visits on different sets, actually betray an interest in the moviemaking process. Even though she often scrutinizes the cinema through the filter of her theatrical experience she is appreciative of the specificities of the medium and of its technical, industrial and commercial evolutions. She confesses in some of her first articles ("Le Roi de la mer", "Femmes de France") that she is impatient to see the cinema get rid of the purely theatrical hindrances and artifices (Virmaux 491-3) so that it can fully express its potentialities. Despite undeniable subjectivity, it is overall with optimism, distance and lucidity that Colette, the writer, "*théâtreuse*" and journalist, examines cinema in her film criticism.

That being said, her approach and her auctorial posture in these non-fiction writings can also be defined more precisely. There is naturalism in her articles on cinema (as when she compares a spotlight on the set in "Le Ciné" with a bright celestial body ("*astre*")) as well as sensuality as in all her writings: attention to detail and sensory perceptions abound in her descriptions. In this way, she goes as far as mentioning the sound of the recording device in "L'Envers du ciné" or the intensified hues of colors lit by spotlights in "Le Ciné" for instance. As suggested before, however, her sensitivity to

126 "An ingenious fashion by which a scene that is independent from the main scene is isolated and shown in a medallion-like form."

the visual prevails over anything else. Actually, one photograph of her dating from 1953 vividly symbolizes her posture (fig.24).

fig.24. Colette's look

In 1938, Colette published *La Jumelle noire* ("*Black binoculars*") which compiles the theater criticism that she wrote between 1933 and 1938. The presence of optical devices in the aforementioned title and picture alludes to Colette's predisposition for the visual and especially for close, detailed observation. Her discursive posture in her film criticism is similar to this gesture of putting one's glasses or binoculars so as to better see a spectacle. A keen observer, she has in herself "le génie du regard" ("a genius for the act of looking", *ABCdaire* 78); but she might also have developed this talent following her mother's advice and motto: "Regarde, regarde le monde" ("behold, behold the world", Kristeva 19). Accordingly, she writes her cinema articles by positioning herself, not only as a journalist, and a chronicler of the cultural and artistic life of her time, but as a witness and a spectator, in the plainest sense of the term. Several people who knew her

discerned this characteristic in her. Thus, Musidora thought that "qu'elle observe, qu'elle scrute ou qu'elle critique, tout était en place[127]" (Virmaux 323) while journalist Raymond Millet praised "son observation lucide et impitoyable" ("her lucid and merciless observation", Virmaux 382).

Such testimonies indicate how people other than herself truly conceived Colette's auctority as incorporating a personal gift for observation. Baudelaire considered photography with the experienced eye of the art amateur and art critic; Colette considered the cinema with the experienced eye of the theatrical entertainer. If, in Baudelaire's case, the mediating agent was imagination, in Colette's case, it is a sense of spectacle. For Julia Kristeva, this sense was also the product of the period, which notably saw the expansion of modern celebrity culture: "Colette n'ignore rien [du] goût français du spectacle. Culture de la monstration, de l'apparition et de l'apparence, la France de la Belle Epoque invente ce qui est notre modernité. L'écrivaine appartient tout entière à cette culture du paraître[128]" (29). Reporting on the various spectacles of her time, she locates herself in the tradition of the "écrivain témoin de son temps" ("the writer as an eyewitness of his/her time") and shares her impressions as a spectator in her writings. "Spectatrice fascinée et bon public, ainsi se définit-elle[129]," Jean Queval specifies in an interview of the writing lady in 1949 (Virmaux 448) – this amounts to say that, had this been possible, Colette might as well have had a specific career as a spectator. She was primarily a writer

127 "Whether she observed, scrutinized or criticized, everything was in the right place."

128 "Colette knows everything [about the] French taste for spectacles. Having a culture of showing, appearance, and looks, the France of the Belle Epoque [1871-1914] invented what is our modernity. The writer belongs entirely to this culture of appearances."

129 "A fascinated and benevolent spectator – this is how she defined herself."

however and her skill for observation necessarily fed her writing. Thus, Colette's depictions of the backstage world of cinema, recording the habits and customs, the innovations and achievements of a species newly arrived in the entertainment business make her an heir to the nineteenth-century writers of *physiologies* and other descriptive guides of the literary sphere of the period. An occasional theorist of the new medium of cinema and a frequent critic of its products, Colette could also be an ethnologist of its professionals. What the French female writer did for cinema is comparable to what she did for an older form of spectacle that she particularly appreciated, namely theater and music-hall entertainment. Changing auctorial posture one more time, Colette in 1934-5, brought together her curiosity for cinema and her experience in performing arts in one of her most remarkable contributions to cinema, a movie entitled *Divine* that enabled her to be more than a spectator of the cinematic adaptations of her own works.

DIVINE COLETTE: "J'AIMERAIS AUSSI FAIRE DU CINEMA[130]"

Reclaiming authorship

Divine, although directed by renowned director Max Ophuls (*Letter from an Unknown Woman*, *Le Plaisir*, *Lola Montès*), did not leave an unforgettable memory after its release in 1935. Even its director, disappointed with its blatant lack of success, refuses to talk about the film in his memoirs (Ophuls 172). The situation is no better on Colette's side as biographies and studies about her hardly ever mentioned the film, or only as

130 "I'd like to work for the cinema too" (Virmaux 383).

another side activity for the writer – and yet Colette's involvement in the making of the film ranked with her previous contributions. As with *Minne* and *La Vagabonde*, she visited the filming locations; and in the 1935 article "Acteurs de cinéma" she depicted the shooting and the atmosphere on the set. More importantly, Colette, this time, was clearly credited, on the film poster and in the opening credits, with being at the origin of the script and dialogues. A first-class advertising argument as she was now "Madame Colette" for the French public and a distinguished signature to add on an artistic, or commercial, product, the claim, in the credits, that *Divine* could boast of having "le premier scénario écrit directement pour l'écran par Colette" ("Colette's first script directly written for the screen") was somewhat deceitful and forgetful of her past experiences with cinema. Admittedly, the writer had contributed very indirectly, and generally without being credited, to the scripts of the film adaptations made from her works in the past. She had however written the dialogues for Marc Allégret's film version of Vicki Baum's novel, *Le Lac aux dames*, the year before; and she had also, nearly two decades before, wrote a first original script with *La Flamme sacrée*. It seems therefore that some people involved in the production of *Divine* had then short memories concerning Colette's past involvement in cinema.

It is also true that, in the previous years, her career in cinema had been at a low ebb. Except for occasional articles in the press, she had not often been contacted to take part in projects related to the cinema. And yet, it was not for lack of trying to make convincing appeals to the people concerned. In the 1920s and early 1930s, the writer indeed embarked on a media campaign of sorts to catch the attention of the cinema

industry. Claiming publicly her love for the medium as soon as she had an opportunity to do so, she went as far as confessing in an interview in 1926 that she would love to direct a movie herself (Virmaux 383). Simultaneously, she would say yes to "toutes les marques d'intérêt du cinéma à son égard, même pour de simples campagnes publicitaires[131]" (Virmaux 387). It was the moment for her to get her revenge on all the projects that had fallen flat in the past, such as her first contact with the Gaumont company in 1907 to make a film inspired by the mimodrama she was playing on stage with her mistress Missy or the dead-end project of adapting *Chéri* for the screen in 1922. A real come back into favor (Virmaux 379), the 1930s and the shooting of *Divine* were for the writer an unhoped-for opportunity to prove that she was as legitimate in cinema as she was in literature and, above all, to modify her image, shifting her auctorial posture from journalist-critic judging a final product to script and dialogue writer directly implicated in the making of a movie.

Surely, Colette hoped that her status as the official writer for the movie would spare her the unpleasant inconvenience that she had experienced in the past, namely, the little attention given to her role as author, including when the movies in question were adaptations made from her works. Her collaboration was often widely known but uncredited (Virmaux 19) and, more often than not, she was not even consulted. On several occasions, she expressed herself on this ignorance of her authorship and deplored that writers were deliberately kept away from the making of the movies for which they had provided stories. As soon as 1917 and her presence on the set of *La Vagabonde*, she

[131] "All display of interest towards her on the part of cinema, including for mere advertising campaigns."

somewhat bitterly indicated in the account of her impressions in "L'Envers du cinéma": "ce n'est pas *mon* travail qui me retient ici … Moi, je suis *seulement* ce témoin, cet indiscret, cet oisif: l'auteur du scénario qu'on est en train de tourner[132]" (Virmaux 332, my emphasis). Being *only* the author of *La Vagabonde*, Colette had to be silent and invisible on the set. Twenty years later, the situation had apparently not changed much. As Serge de Poligny was directing a filmic version of *Claudine à l'école*, Colette, who had nothing to do with the project, again voiced her concern about the status of writers within such processes of adaptation from one medium to another. With the intent of summing up her position, the newspaper *L'Intransigeant*, which interviewed her on the subject, stated: "Si un écrivain n'adapte pas lui-même ses oeuvres à l'écran, il ne retrouvera plus dans ses personnages que les enfants des autres : telle est la pensée de l'écrivain[133]" (Virmaux 408). Colette was a little more subtle in expressing her views : "j'estime qu'un auteur dont on met à l'écran un personnage doit, ou bien écrire lui-même son scénario et son dialogue, ou bien s'en rapporter aux techniciens. Ne souhaitant pas prendre la responsabilité d'un film dont je ne suis pas l'auteur, il me semble naturel de laisser ses auteurs agir au mieux de leurs intérêts[134]" (Virmaux 409). Accordingly, it was more or less with good grace that she agreed to see the story of her emblematic heroine be adapted for the screen without being asked for help.

---

132 "It is not *my* work that keeps me here … I am *only* this witness, this indiscreet idler – the author of the script that is being shot."

133 "If a writer does adapt his/her works for the screen, he/she will only find the children of others in his/her characters – that si the opinion of the writer."

134 "I think that an author who sees one of his/her characters being adapted for the screen must either write the script and dialogues or rely on technicians. As I don't want to take the responsibility for a film that I haven't authored, it seems to me only natural to let its authors do in the best of their interests."

Colette's dissatisfaction with this widespread tendency in cinema which consisted in drawing extensively from literary sources without acknowledging it and often without providing financial compensation was certainly not specific to her: it was, on the contrary, an old problem and a lasting point of contention between literature and cinema. In his study on writers and early cinema in France, Alain Carou chronicles the complex, hectic relationships between the specialists of literature and the burgeoning industry. The pre-war period in France was marked by a sensational trial opposing renowned playwrights to the moviemaking company Pathé, in 1908. The matter in dispute was the uncredited use of the playwrights' literary creations for the making of films which partially or entirely reproduced the content of their plays. Since 1791, the French law protected literary property and prohibited the representation and duplication of works by living authors without their consent. The appearance of cinema, which was at first conceived as a recording device comparable to photography, questioned the relevance of this foundational copyright law (Carou 47). For many writers, the so-called "adaptation" of their writings for cinematographic purposes was nothing but an infringement of their rights as creators. The trial ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and estimated that the cinema "brought back to life" the authors' works in front of the spectators' eyes and, in so doing, performed an act of representation as the literary text did: the cinematographic technique, just like the phonograph and its recording discs, was nothing but a form of publication, which violated the very basis of the 1791 copyright law (Carou 76). Consequently, the unauthorized use or "borrowing" of literary sources would, from then on, be equated with other disgraceful illegal practices like plagiarism, piracy, or forgery.

Colette lived through, and worked for cinema, in a period when the mechanical (re)production of visual works entailed a disruption and subsequent redefinition of the notion of representation and of the existing taxonomic system of spectacles. In turn, this crisis considerably modified the relationships between authors of literary works and creators of visual productions. One noticeable change was the gradual invention of the occupation of script writer; another was the attempt to institutionalize writers' contribution to filmic production. When it became obvious for people exploiting the cinematograph that the technique could rank with literature and theater and be used to narrate stories, opportunities to provide these stories were sought and so were people. Two possibilities rapidly arose: either these people had no previous literary experience but were implied in the making of films (Méliès, or Ferdinand Zecca working for Pathé belonged to this category) or they were professional literary authors, generally novelists or playwrights – with the abovementioned legal muddle that such configuration could foster if the stories were inspired from preexisting works.

The cinematographic need for stories motivated the actual appearance of the function of screenplay writer but overlooked the literary world's reaction in front of this new expression of authorship that nobody had anticipated. Two initiatives that were contemporaneous with the 1908 trial materialized, in France, an attempt to harmonize the relations between literature and the budding film industry. The creation of the production corporations *Le Film d'Art* and *SCAGL* (Société Cinématographique des Auteurs et Gens de Lettres) in 1908 served the purpose of simplifying the relations between writers and companies like Pathé or Gaumont by offering a common working framework. Both

institutions aimed at producing films presenting scenes coming from literary works authored by recognized men and women of letters. *Le Film d'Art* specialized in original scripts and *SCAGL* in the adaptations of existing works (Carou 86). Within these corporations, authors were supposed to be not only legally protected but considered as true collaborators. Despite the will to give writers a decent and established place in the manufacturing of films, the enterprise rapidly came to end. It is nevertheless a good historical indicator of the context which Colette had to confront when her work was used by the cinema. Although, after 1908, the law guaranteed legal and financial recognition for writers collaborating with the medium, literary authors, as Colette's experiences with the adaptations of her texts prove, were still rarely given a say in the matter when it came to the actual making of the movie and often felt deprived of their authorship. After several difficult episodes, Colette, who had ideas of her own about filming even though she claimed the contrary, was clearly in this state of mind when she was asked to contribute to *Divine*. For her, her involvement was surely more than a matter of ensuring copyright and writing a story, it was also a matter of leaving an identifiable trace on the movie so as to signify its affiliation with the Colettian *oeuvre*.

Divine **or "l'envers du music-hall"**

Divine tells the story of a young woman, Ludivine, who leaves her countryside and goes to live in Paris so as to work in the variety show theater where her cousin, Roberte, is already employed. In the French capital, Ludivine, renamed Divine, discovers

the pleasures but, above all, the adversities of urban life; in the Empyrée theater where she replaces her cousin, she discovers the corruption, artificiality and dangers of the theatrical world. Working as a dancer in this unpretentious theater, she is preyed on by one of her fellow artists, a villainous fakir who is involved in drug trafficking, and his bisexual girlfriend, Dora. She also has to deal with financial difficulties and to struggle to keep her pride and decency in an environment that is prone to treat femininity and sexuality as consumption goods. The movie relies on the conventional *topos*, often used in French literature, of the innocent provincial girl who goes to Paris and finds herself threatened by urban decadence and amorality. Structured by rudimentary naïve Manicheism, *Divine* contrasts "l'agreste et le citadin" ("rustic and urban") in a schematic dualism opposing "un milieu malsain (le music-hall, la débauche, les artifices, la drogue) et un milieu sain (la campagne, le grand air, les animaux, la simplicité)[135]" (Virmaux 118-19). This dualism is further embodied by two male figures showing an interest in seducing Ludivine, the malevolent man of the theater and a nice down-to-earth milkman.

For Alain and Odette Virmaux, it is the exceedingly ingenuous polarity of the film, to which Max Ophuls's refined style was particularly unsuited, that accounts for the movie's flop (119). The ode to nature and simple, epicurean, countryside life was certainly a signature theme in Colette's writings (Flieger 2) but not a theme of preference for Ophuls who was more comfortable with the depiction of the evils of a frivolous, greedy society or of femininity as his subsequently successes with *Letters from an*

[135] "An unhealthy environment (music-hall, debauchery, artifice, drugs) and a healthy environment (countryside, open air, animals, simplicity)."

Unknown Woman or *Madame de…* confirmed. A movie of unbalanced quality illustrating the negative consequence of the existence of jarring styles and diverging perspectives between script writer and director, *Divine* is nonetheless worth considering for its depiction of variety theater life. This eminently artificial world, with its backstage space made of stairs, ropes, and movable backdrops and its dressing-rooms inaccessible to the public where scheming, sexual and illegal affairs are current, obviously inspired Ophuls and gave him an opportunity to show his mastery of elaborate, smooth camera movements like tracking shots. For Colette, choosing such an environment for her story was to reconnect with the past while reasserting her deep attachment to the theater and hinting at a thematic predilection that characterized her literary *oeuvre*. Like her journalistic pieces in theater and cinema criticism, her script for *Divine* presents a perceptive study of the music-hall microcosm and its Bohemian life.

The depiction of premises, people and hectic activity surrounding the preparation of performances is given as much importance as the progression of the plot. Colette also included scenes devoted to the spectacles in which Divine appears: *tableaux vivants* in the exotic style, they offer the vision of lightly dressed girls to the voyeuristic gaze of the audience. Ludivine is no comedian, no mime, not even a genuine artist, only a barely trained dancing girl among a battalion of other anonymous beauties. The presence of photographs in their common dressing-room alludes to the expansion of celebrity culture and the visibility of luckier, successful figures of the theater or the cinema and to the fascination that they rouse even in their variety show colleagues. Despite her Garbo-like, goddess-like stage name, Divine, however, does not embody the famous elite of the

French show-business (as Colette could) but the small fry of local entertainment. With such a character, Colette emphasizes the hardships of entertainers' lives while paying a tribute to a professional class she had been close to in the past. "Ce milieu du music-hall, très curieux, n'a pas été assez décrit[136]," she wrote to her brother Léo in 1908 (Pichois & Brunet 186). She took the task into her own hands as she wrote *La Vagabonde* (1910), *L'Envers du music-hall* (1913) or *Mitsou* (1919) which are all set in this milieu. With *Divine*, she undertook to extend the description to the cinematic medium, sensing maybe that the cinema, which shared so many features with the theater, would prove an incomparable means of bringing to light the visuality of this world entirely dedicated to the art of spectacle. In this perspective, Colette hid nothing from what she knew to be common in music-halls and revealed "l'envers trouble des apparences" ("the shady side of appearances", Bonal 286).

The screenplay and dialogues that she wrote contain all the ingredients that could already be found in her writings: the almost sociological study of a marginal, artistic professional environment, the tense relationships between the sexes in this environment and the description of the creation of theatrical spectacles. Colette deals with the first aspect in the scene when Ludivine discovers Roberte's apartment in which she is to live while she is away. Colette, and Ophuls after her, resorts to a visual motif to suggest the decadence of the Parisian entertainment world in which Roberte has been living for some time: the disorder in her home, which is verbally referred to by Ludivine, visually connotes the dissoluteness of her life (fig.25).

[136] "The music-hall world, which is very curious, has not been sufficiently described."

fig.25. Discovering Roberte's apartment

Roberte lives among luxuries and probably beyond her means (which suggests that she may not only be a dancer but a kept woman) but her life lacks order, discipline and decency. In contrast, the apartment is impeccably tidy when Ludivine occupies it. Colette, in this scene, relied again on dualism to contrast her heroine's provincial rural righteousness with her cousin's Parisian artistic depravity. The innocence/corruption dichotomy reflects a social perception of the artistic world that associates it with money, materialism, laxity, and sexual promiscuity. As she often does, the writer uses a visual detail to say more than what is explicitly expressed and denounce the faults of a superficial, interest-driven society.

In her writings, as in *Divine*, Colette made no secret that the universe of theatrical performing arts was a sexually charged environment. The exhibition of the body, the expression of emotions and the constant promiscuity between artists in dressing-rooms or on tours were prone to bring people closer. What she shows in *Divine* however is solely the negative side of the proximity between man and women in theaters. No love story is possible for Ludivine within the walls of the theater where libidinous men try to seduce

her, promising her support or a striking stage number that will guarantee her a career. The mysterious fakir and Dora embody another kind of threat as they try to lure her into participating in their drug dealing. The diversion of seduction and sexuality for interests other than love relationships accentuates the idea that variety show entertainment is all about artifice and deception, both onstage and backstage. For all that, Colette, in *Divine*, never proposes the somewhat hazy idea that, for music-hall artists, life backstage is nothing but a prolongation of the spectacle on stage. On the contrary, she clearly distinguishes the two spaces in *Divine* so as to better present the preparation of a spectacle as a long-term tedious work. By inserting in her dialogues remarks on how girls need to be careful with what they eat lest they could no longer wear their costumes and be even more careful with not becoming pregnant if they want to keep their job – not to mention the frequent allusions to their meagre wages – the writer refers to a harsh reality that only insiders to the theatrical world know well. Similarly, the scenes with the ballet master or the rehearsal scenes are a reminder that entertaining an audience every day with a spectacle requires regular training and discipline. Theatrical entertainment, Colette shows, is for performing arts professionals no amusing pastime but a demanding, poorly-paid vocation as she herself figured out when she was a mime and comedian.

In many respects, *Divine* appears to have been an opportunity for Colette to do something that was very close to her heart, namely, to portray the world of variety shows and theatrical performances that she knew so well but deemed undervalued by art and literature. What she truly focused on is "l'envers du music-hall" ("the other side of music-hall"), the secret life of its artists and workers so as to testify to the seriousness and

harshness of this undervalued form of spectacle. Although it is indicated nowhere in the movie's credits, the script for *Divine* was indeed actually derived from her anterior text *L'Envers du music-hall* in which she relates, in the form of successive short scenes, her memories and impressions of the life that she led as a music-hall artist between 1906 and 1912. Thus, *Divine*, *L'Envers du music-hall* and the article "Acteurs de cinéma" that Colette wrote in 1935 on the shooting of Ophuls's film constitute an intertextual triptych in which the different parts echo one another through the replication of themes and anecdotes. The three works enabled the writer to develop a gallery of characters that she obviously saw as representative of the theatrical population. She also depicts situations and customs that give an insight into their everyday living and working conditions.

In her screenplay for *Divine*, the writer thus incorporated some of the anecdotes that she had recounted earlier in *L'Envers du music-hall* such as the trick used by Ludivine and her friends to have a man pay for their meal in a restaurant. Drawing the customer's attention by talking loud about what they would like to eat, they count on his hope to seduce one of them to bring him to pay and then leave the restaurant, mentioning their (imagined) husbands and children not to have to compromise themselves with their generous admirer. Similarly, Colette recycles the section "L'enfant de Bastienne" from *L'Envers du music hall* (35-9) in *Divine*. With this character, which is not named in the screenplay though, she tackles the issue of maternity among chorus girls in variety shows. Bastienne is an unmarried mother: she has to play hide and seek with her employers at the theater to conceal the existence of her child. The same character appears in *Divine* in a revelatory backstage scene in which a dancer secretly breast-feeds her baby

with the complicity of her fellow dancers. Such a detail illustrates how Colette's story for the cinema was grounded in her close observation of a social reality that the artifice of show business often concealed from the public's eyes. There are both journalistic investigation and personal remembrances at the basis of Colette's cinematographic work here.

Although inspired by *L'Envers du music-hall*, *Divine* was presented as a fiction. Colette introduced in the story a scene in which her heroine has to perform with a snake – probably with the intention of underlining the courageous professionalism of the character as well as the demanding nature of variety show spectacles. Divine, although a novice in the profession, does not falter on stage and the spectacle is a success (fig.26). Relating her visit on the set of the movie in "Acteurs de cinéma", Colette underscores how reality sometimes meets fiction by describing an almost similar scene with leading actress Simone Berriau. It is her reactions when faced with the "formidable mute actor" known as "Joseph the python" that are reported by the writer, to whom this feat inspired admirative considerations on actors and their "vocation" (Virmaux 170).

fig.26. Divine and Joseph the python

From *L'Envers du music-hall* to *Divine* and from *Divine* to "Acteurs de cinéma", Colette's exploration of behind-the-scene life in the world of visual spectacle came full circle. These works which blend fiction and reality articulate like a play of mirrors reverberating the writer's interests, perceptions and memories. Each production, in its own genre and medium, offers a slightly different perspective on the same subject, echoing their originator's diverse auctorial identity; for, despite their apparent differences, *L'Envers du music-hall*, *Divine* and "Acteurs de cinéma" are all, in the end, about Colette's life and about her own literary vocation.

Creating Colette: the autobiographical impulse

Much has been written on the autobiographical character of Colette's writings and on her tendency to mix genres and interweave fact and fiction. Her constant play on reality and invention can even be regarded as a hallmark of the Colettian *oeuvre* as, from the very beginning, and the conception of the *Claudine* books, it was present in her works. In this way, under a very thin veil of fiction that was soon not enough to conceal the truth from the public, the *Claudine* series related her childhood in provincial countryside, her marriage to Willy and their unconventional life in Paris; *La Vagabonde* was inspired from the years she spent in theaters and on tours as variety show artist; and in *La Naissance du jour* the narrator is an old woman named Colette who wrote books that are nothing but the *Claudine* volumes – and yet, all these texts are labelled as "novels" in their paratexts. For those who were familiar with the author and her environment, the fictional veneer, however, did not hold very long. After reading *La*

Vagabonde, Colette's mother, Sido, wrote to her "mais c'est une autobiographie! Tu ne peux le nier[137]" (Pichois & Brunet 186). It became rapidly known that her texts could be read as "*romans à clef*" in which seemingly fictional characters could be identified as real people and be given names. In view of the visual exploitation of the Claudine novels (fig.20), their author herself apparently often enjoyed perpetuating the ambiguity and confusion surrounding the true nature of her works, which could only encourage more speculation. Colette's fictional world appears then to be primarily a reinterpretation of what she lived and her literary production a form of "*affabulation créative*" ("creative fantasizing"). The question however remains whether this also true for her cinematographic works.

There are, in Colette's bibliography, texts that are officially claimed to be autobiographical (*Sido* or *La Maison de Claudine* for instance) but most texts oscillate so much between "straightforward autobiographical statements" (Flieger 1) referring directly to reality and fabricated literary narration that they are difficult to categorize. J.A. Flieger, investigating Colette's penchant for autobiography, proposes a three-tier typology of the writer's more or less autobiographical writings even though she concedes that most texts actually defy classification (4). She calls "impressionist memoirs" the texts in which "reflection rather than plot" is developed, which "recount daily incidents and reflect on them with free flights of associative fantasy, and where the "I" is often an observer and dreamer, rather than an involved actor" (4). Anecdotal writings with an emphasis on recollections and "entertaining musings" (4), they include *Le Fanal Bleu* or

[137] "It is for sure an autobiography! You cannot deny it."

L'Etoile Vesper. Although not mentioned by Flieger, I would be tempted to also place *L'Envers du music-hall* in this category. Coming from "a long literary tradition in which the author draws from [his/her] own life experience to shape [his/her] work" (5), "autobiographical fiction" is another literary form in which Colette excelled. The entanglement of fact and fiction merging autobiographical data and fictive elements "made it hard to draw the line between the writer and her fictional *alter egos*" (6) but created a wonderful play space in which notions of verisimilitude, truth or perception were challenged. If the *Claudine* books and *La Vagabonde* belong to this vein, *Mes Apprentissages*, *Le Pur et L'Impur* or *La Naissance du Jour* are, according to Flieger, representative of the final class of "fictional autobiography". Fictional autobiographies are characterized by their complex fictionalized character in the sense that, even though the first-person narration identifies the writer Colette as the narrator, the text continues "to veil the author's essential self" (6) and the biographically verifiable truth. An aura of fiction always surrounds the narrating "I" and the events described so that clear identification is compromised.

For Flieger, "*all* of Colette's works – novels and autobiographies alike – remain works of fiction in a sense, where "guesses" and "inventions" are in the company of the most candid confessions, and where the creation itself seems to harbor its own secrets, propelled by forces the writer herself does not fully understand" (7). She describes these "forces" as "the fantom subject of autobiography" in Colette's works, I would refer to it as the irresistible autobiographical impulse in Colette's artistic creation. Decades before "autofiction" became a fashionable literary phenomenon in French culture, Colette

explored the creative potentialities inherent to the intertwining of life and literature and the blurring of the boundaries between them. Before Serge Dubrovsky (who coined the term and popularized the concept of autofiction in the 1970s), Annie Ernaux, Hervé Guibert or Christine Angot, Colette was a precursor in playing with the "trompe-l'oeil littéraire" ("literary trompe-l'oeil", Bonal 103) created by autofiction as the narration of real events through processes of enunciation and storytelling that incorporate fiction so as to interrogate the writer's self (Hubier 18). If most of her works can be read as some "romans de soi" ("novels considering the self", Hubier 15), they also bring to light the elusiveness of an artistic "I" that uses writing to confound the public in the same way as it uses the visual (in the forms of varied photographs or mime performances) in other circumstances. Hypothesizing that there was in Colette an urge to fantasize her life and reinterpret it while including real biographical data that exceeded the limits of literature, I would like to open one last perspective on *Divine* and track down the presence of this textual phantom of sorts that enacts the writer's impulse towards reinvented autobiography and self-(re)creation.

Is there anything Colettian in the heroine of the movie *Divine*? I would give a positive answer to this question. Some details indicate that Colette may have indeed used herself as a model for the character. Firstly, Ludivine's life trajectory is strikingly reminiscent of Colette's own trajectory as a young provincial girl moving to Paris and discovering a world far less simple and altruistic than her native countryside. The involvement in an artistic occupation in a theatrical environment full of both promises and threats also strikes a chord. As for Ludivine's return to the countryside with the

milkman at the end of the story, no such thing appears in Colette's biography but her repeated stays in the countryside and the various secondary homes she had in Jura, Normandy or the South of France betray her deep attachment to her rural roots. As for the idyll with the milkman, it is evidence of her thematic predilection for youth's pure and virtuous love relationships in pastoral settings that is also perceptible in *Le Blé en herbe* for example. Even the Ludivine/Divine split identity of the heroine is in itself telling: it certainly contributes to the general dualism of the movie (echoing notably other dichotomies like those opposing nature and artifice or innocence and corruption) but it also reverberates the writer's own split identity by which the anonymous country girl Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette became the artist and writer Colette. Through the character of Divine, Colette stages her self, or rather a certain revised version of her self through which she seems to try to redeem herself. One scene in particular is an interesting retelling of a famous event in Colette's life.

As one of the dancers in the *tableau* representing a slave market Divine is supposed to be forced by the master to disrobe and reveal her naked body to the audience. To whoever is familiar with the writer's biography, this passage is strangely evocative of the naked breast episode when Colette, playing in *La Chair*, had her dress torn by her jealous lover (fig.18). There is however one major difference: whereas Colette ended up half-naked in most performances of *La Chair*, Divine, very impressed by the presence of the audience, resists her jailor, grabs his whip and strikes him with it, causing him to fall. The theater manager is furious but the audience is ecstatic (fig.27).

fig.27. Divine's resistance

By making her heroine refuse to submit, Colette flamboyantly constructs her cinematic *alter ego* as a strong, irreproachable and incorruptible woman. Similarly, different behaviors in Ludivine, such as her orderliness in Roberte's apartment or her refusal to yield to the fakir's propositions, signify the dignity, innocence and ingenuity of the character. Such characterization stands in contrast with her own scandalous image and Divine then reads as a purified version of a past self of Colette's. According to Pichois and Brunet, she confessed to her mother that it was initially difficult for her to expose her body when, after marrying Willy, she went out with him in Parisian high society clad with sleeveless or low-cut dresses (63). Her heroine may therefore embody this initial phase of her public life when she still could have resisted but did not. There lies in this narrative choice the suggestion that the writer, when she was in Divine's place, did not have her strong-mindedness and that she may have been a victim of the theatrical environment's decadence that induced her to behave as she did. In this perspective, Divine's resistance to the fakir and Dora appears to serve the same purpose: without going as far as considering *Divine* as a "*film à clef*", it is nonetheless possible to read the

characters of the fakir and Dora as caricatures of Willy and women like Missy or Natalie Clifford Barney who initiated her into scandal and homosexual relationships.

With her screenplay for *Divine*, Colette re-imagines a troubled period in her existence and refashions the image of the fearless music-hall female artist with which she herself had come to be identified. She revises her past and fantasizes "une autre version des faits" ("another version of real facts", Bonal 286) in a work that extends her exploration of autobiographical fiction. Gérard Bonal, quoting Colette herself, analyzes the writer's autobiographical impulse in terms of nostalgia and narcissism:

> Elle l'avoue volontiers : elle aime « ressasser le connu, orner à neuf l'aboli ». Ce qui l'entraîne souvent à truquer le passé, voire à le recréer de toutes pièces, poussée par un profond désir narcissique : « la compagne bien-aimée que je cherchais, n'était-ce pas l'ancien moi-même … [Le passé], si j'y plonge, quel vertige ! … Outre la personne que je fus, il me révèle celle que j'aurais voulu être[138]. » (286)

In that perspective, Divine can be seen as a mirror reflecting a distorted idealized image in which Colette tries to find a more satisfying self. A fantasy of past innocence regained, she embodies the writer's subjective and revising point of view over her own experience. After Claudine and Renée Néré in *La Vagabonde*, Divine definitely reads as an additional fictional Colettian *alter ego*, a fictional declension of herself that enables her to rework her own personal myth. The specificity of this character, however, is that it exists on the periphery of the writer's *oeuvre*: vaguely related to texts like *L'Envers du music-hall*, *La Vagabonde* or "Acteurs de cinéma", it is an epitextual creation adjacent to her texts that

---

[138] "She gladly confesses that she likes "to keep turning over what is known, to give a new ornamentation to what is abolished". This often leads her to tamper with the past, or to completely recreate it, moved as she was by a profound narcissistic desire: "the beloved companion that I was looking for, was she not my former self … If I plunge into [the past], what dizzines! … Besides the person that I was, it reveals to me the woman I would have loved to be.""

expands “la toile de sa fiction” (“the web of her fiction”, Bonal 286) by annexing another medium. Colette’s autobiographical profusion prefigures what Daniel Madelénat describes as the expansion of the “*galaxie biographoïde*” in recent times through the hybridization and transgression of established biographical and autobiographical models, and notably through media hybridization (95).

Divine indeed is a transposition into cinematographic terms of a literary tendency that pervades Colette’s literature. Such a change in medium enabled Colette not only to experiment with another form of textualization of the self but also to truly become a spectator of herself in a context where celebrity culture and the exhibition of the artistic self already started to develop in a multimedia form. Intrinsically, *Divine* is an autobiographical or autofictional text turned into a cinematic spectacle, and therefore an embodied visual representation. As a character, a projection of an ageing Colette onto a variety show girl, Divine relates to the writer’s theatrical photographic iconography. She is a replication of Colette’s portraits as a music-hall artist, but not so much of the bare breasted Colette in *La Chair* (fig.18) as of Colette as a proud but chaste bayadere (fig.28).

fig.28. Colette as an exotic dancer (Reutlinger 1907)

Divine can be analyzed as a selective transfiguration as it presents a fiction of Colette ignoring her literary vocation to focus only on her theatrical experience. Such a bias implicitly points to an auctorial scenography of artistic freedom, by which the writer means to affirm her will not to be confined to literature. "Je veux faire ce que je veux" Colette claimed (Bonal 315) and, indeed, her various contributions to the cinema enabled her to show her various talents and to construct her auctorial identity as based on pluralism and elusiveness. By trying her hand at the "scénario d'écrivain" Colette proved one more time that she had a real talent for playing with various means of expression and with the limits between reality and fiction. *Divine* celebrates the artist, the "théâtreuse", the performer, and the young ingenuous Gabrielle-Sidonie in Colette; for this reason, it is an illuminating counterpart to Yannick Bellon's documentary which celebrates the author and the experienced lady in Colette.

COLETTE, A FILMIC PORTRAIT

Biographical pictures

In 1950, Colette was 77 years old. In many ways, it was a remarkable year for her, a year that anticipated the intense media activity surrounding her eightieth birthday three years later. For a few years, though, she had been the darling child of the French media and cultural world. The cinema in particular showed great interest in her, and consequently allowed their long-standing relationship to end in a blaze of glory (Virmaux 15). Besides the release of two additional adaptations of *Chéri* and *Minne*, Colette herself

was the focus of the cinema's attention thanks to an official governmental initiative meant to valorize French literature. After the end of World War II, the Directorate of Cultural Relations intended to restore the reputation of the literary world which suffered from a deterioration of its image due to cases of antisemitism and collaboration with the enemy. One project implied appealing to the concurrent medium of cinema to immortalize the voice and image of major living French writers (Pichois & Brunet 493). Paul Claudel, André Gide and Colette were thus elected to be the subjects of these cinematographic tributes. The medium-length movie *Colette* directed by young filmmaker Yannick Bellon in 1950 was the result of this unusual collaboration of cinema with literature. When completed, the film was shown in Colette's apartment and had a few previews, in Paris and at the Cannes festival, before opening for 1953 Autant- Lara's *Le Blé en herbe*. Its career was however shortened by an accident: the film burnt in the lab where it was stored and only reappeared in the 1990s when the French Film Archives and the Centre National du Cinéma decided to restore a remaining copy of the film. Following this restoration, the movie has had a second life and has been shown in festivals, in art-house theaters and on television. Nowadays, it is available on DVD and it still provides an uncommon insight into the universe of a writer who had all her life played with her image – and all the more so as the publishing of the film in 2012 was complemented by a short film in which Bellon shares her memories of the 1950 shooting with the writer.

Colette and Ophuls's *Divine* was a fiction film although it relied on a transfiguration of the writer's memories and fantasies of her past as a theater artist;

Bellon's *Colette* is a non-fiction film although it tells the story of a creation known to the world as "Colette". If the first is implicitly autobiographical, the second is explicitly biographical. Bellon's film is indeed a documentary, that is, a film that "documents" Colette's life by giving a report on some of its actual events. The simultaneous existence of *Divine* and *Colette* illustrates the double orientation taken by cinema from its invention. Initially conceptualized as a tool to record and show moving images, the cinematograph was expected to render the world as it is, with its instantaneity and liveliness. As later claimed by Dziga Vertov, the cinema produced by the cinematograph intrinsically revealed "la vie à l'improviste" ("life in all its unexpectedness", Niney 42). This conception of cinema was directly derived from the use of the recording device by its inventors: the first rolls of film showed by the Lumière brothers were an early form of "cinéma direct" (Niney 43) showing views that had been captured with no modifying intentional interference. The cinema inaugurated by the Lumière style is the same as the cinema promoted later by the "*actualités*" genre ("actuality film") exploited by Pathé and Gaumont in movie theaters and usually shown before fiction movies (Breschand 5). The "*actualités*" used footage of real events in short programs not only to entertain but also to enlighten the audience: they were consequently associated with observation, reality, motionless travel, truth, and directness – and so was their inheritor, the documentary genre. In contrast, another cinema rapidly came into being which privileged imagination and invention and meant to show spectators "un monde ajouté" ("a supplemented world", Niney 19) by means of artifice and special effect, or simply the creation of fiction. This

cinema that truly explored the spectacular dimension of the new medium had Méliès as its early master and evolved towards what is simply considered now as fiction cinema.

The divide between fiction and non-fiction film and its superimposed easy distinction between reality and truth, on the one hand, and invention and lie, on the other hand, has, in the end, only limited relevance when it comes to define what distinguishes the documentary from cinematographic fictional genres. That is why Jean Breschand, examining the historical emergence of the genre, prefers to bring forward another approach: "plutôt qu'une esthétique en soi, c'est un rapport au monde, ce que l'on appellera plus tard un regard, qui se trouve ici identifié[139]" (6). What then characterizes Yannick Bellon's view in her documentary on Colette? What perspective and way of relating to Colette's world does she propose? Bellon's film is a cinematographic piece, not a journalistic piece. Contrary to "*actualités*" (or to what was to become common practice later in television), her film is no report on the current events in a writer's life: it does not chronicle, in a preexisting standard format, some real facts so that they can become history. Her *Colette* is a singular work in which she deploys a personal perspective on her subject. As a documentary, the film certainly documents the writer's life but Bellon's use of the cinematographic medium brings it closer to portraiture than to "*actualités*". Her film intertwines two narrative threads which truly materialize her original perspective on her subject. One is the narration by Colette herself of her life; the

[139]"It is a type of relationship to the world – what will be later called a view, rather than one specific aesthetics, which is here identified."

other is a succession of four scenes, three of which show the writer in different scenes of her everyday life.

The first narrative is made of the alternation of outdoor shots showing some of Colette's fourteen successive dwelling-places with visual documents like newspaper cuts or photographs (fig.29 & 30). It presents a documented yet condensed chronology of her life from her childhood in Burgundy until her moving to her Palais Royal apartment in which she still lived at the moment of the shooting.

fig.29. Colette's native house

fig.30. Colette in visual documents

Although none of the places shot by Bellon was turned into a museum and although no picture of their interior appears in the film, the director's choice to focus on Colette's homes is in keeping with what Elizabeth Emery described as the institutionalization of writers' homes in the twentieth century. In the French imagination, writers' homes came to occupy a special place thanks to the rise of photojournalism and celebrity culture, which both fed the public's obsession with literary celebrities' private lives. As they were associated with a writer's identity and intimacy, these spaces were felt to be in need of being given more visibility in French collective heritage, hence their transformation into museums, and therefore public institutions. As she favored a very spatial point of view to

describe Colette's life, Bellon showed her awareness of "an evolving sense of the importance of patrimony" (3) in French society and confirmed the existence of a modern interest in private spaces as possible revealers of celebrities' personalities and lives. Each location is thus supposed to symbolize a key-period in Colette's life: using spaces as temporal landmarks, the filmmaker underscores the well-known importance of space and *terroirs* in her life and *oeuvre* as well as her amazing mobility in life. Fulfilling Colette's prediction that the cinema would be her last means of travel, Bellon has the invalid arthritis-crippled old woman travel in the time and space of her own past.

The inclusion of visual documents complements the spatiotemporal travel with a journey into the imaginary space of memory – personal memory for Colette but collective cultural memory for the spectator. Their function is to constitute a professional biography by listing the highlights of her career. This visual *curriculum vitae* underscores the diversity of her professional life as it shows book covers and articles signed with Colette's name together with pictures of her performances in pantomimes. Most of these have now become familiar pictures as they have been repeatedly reproduced in books about Colette over the years. The use of photographs exacerbates the multimodal nature of the filmic medium while echoing the writer's own multiplicity. In the same way that Colette tried her hand at literary fiction, pantomime, comedy, script writing, journalism or film criticism, the cinema can resort to still and moving images, but also to sounds, speech and music to express what it had to express. In *Colette*, Bellon further exploits this intrinsic multimodality by having Colette (although, let us remember, she disapproved of the use of sound in cinema) do the voice-over commentary. As she

explains in the 2012 documentary on her own documentary, Bellon wanted to create continuity between the sequences of this visual chronology by resorting to sound and more precisely by incorporating relevant extracts from Colette's texts. She hoped to find in these quotes "the matter and the comment for the film" that would enable her to both personalize her perspective on her subject and link up Colette's life and *oeuvre*. She noticed however that her selection of passages did not have enough coherence as "connections were lacking" and she asked Colette to write, and then record, original texts that would be used as transitions. So, although Bellon was responsible for the narrative structure and specific point of view of the movie, Colette's voice-over gives the impression that she is the one who is imposing her point of view. Such a narrative trick generates an illusion of autobiography in this alleged biographical film – unless we should read it as another expression of Colette's characteristic autobiographical fantom subject. It also brings in the writer's works in an original way and overcomes the difficulty of showing literature and its products on a screen.

The chronological telling of Colette's life is actually embedded in a scene of a very different nature showing the author and her husband during breakfast in 1950, so that two temporalities (past and present) are interwoven within the film. As Bellon intended to structure her documentary as the combination of a retrospective examination of the writer's fate and an introspection into her current daily life at the Palais-Royal, she added three interior scenes showing an ageing Colette in her ordinary environment, that is, at home, with her husband, Maurice Goudeket, her servant, Pauline, and her friend, Jean Cocteau – the succession of scenes suggesting a cinematic recreation of a typical

day. The documentary indeed starts, as a fiction film could, with Colette waking up and then having breakfast with Goudeket. At no moment is there any voice-over comment or written indication aimed at the spectators that specifies the true nature of the film and its purpose. The documentary starts *in medias res* and brings the spectator as an intruder in Colette's life. In that respect, the filming reproduces the voyeuristic, testimonial, and direct perspective of early cinema: it seems that Bellon, like the Lumière brothers, just left her camera in Colette's apartment so that it could record *sur le vif* ("without any preparation") what happens there.

This is nonetheless an illusion as Bellon's film was actually a scripted and staged work. With these three scenes in which Colette has breakfast, checks with Pauline what she bought at the market and has a conversation with Cocteau, Bellon had a specific objective in mind: as she confessed in the 2012 making-of video, she meant to record these people's speeches, to give them an opportunity to express themselves and to give their personalities free rein but she wanted them to react in a specific context that would allow her to bring to light certain personality traits in Colette. In other words, through the staging of these scenes, she wanted to provide a contextual framework in which they would improvise and show themselves as they were. Although it is not fiction, *Colette* relies on *mise-en-scène* and editing to produce specific storytelling effects that serve its biographical purpose. Even though its director gives *carte blanche* to Colette and the others in terms of dialogues, she carefully constructs her documentary by opposing the narrative flow of Colette's multimodal visual biography and the revealing character of a

series of vignettes showing Colette interact with other persons and, so to speak, provide evidence of her mastery of language and of her remarkable personality.

These scenes also fulfil another function as they prolong the perspective on the writer's intimate life opened by the filming of her various houses. Thanks to Bellon's camera, the spectators are invited in Colette's interior as in her daily routine. They intrude into *tête-à-têtes* which unveil the intimacy of a "personnage légendaire" ("legendary figure"), as Bellon repeatedly calls Colette, who turns out to be simply and fragilely human. Physically weakened, greedy, elusive and slightly bossy, the ageing writer is somewhat demystified, even though she never gives the secret of her literary talent. Yannick Bellon's work appears to be a modern declension of an old cultural ritual which Olivier Nora analyzed in the explicitly entitled article "La Visite au grand écrivain" ("The Visit to the Great Writer"). For Nora, the practice of visiting eminent writers and giving an account of this visit in the media of the time has become so culturally common over the centuries that it has accessed the status of a genre, with its own codification that accelerated the evolution of the literary space into a spectacular space (564). At first anecdotal in nature, "the visit to the great writer" has become a form of investigation examining the expression of a writer's identity in his/her daily material environment (580). Nora explains:

> Visite: « Recherche, perquisition dans un lieu pour retrouver quelque chose ou quelqu'un » (Littré). Cette acception du mot est révélatrice : la visite au grand écrivain ne se dépare jamais de la dimension topographique d'une visite domiciliaire. Dans le cas présent, il ne s'agit pas seulement de « retrouver quelque chose ou quelqu'un », mais de déceler quelque chose d'indicible dans quelque chose de prosaïque – le génie dans le cadre familier – ou de surprendre quelqu'un de prosaïque dans quelque chose de sacré – l'homme nu dans le sanctuaire. Selon

> que le visiteur vient admirer l'écrivain dans un lieu où il cherche les indices d'une confirmation du génie, ou bien surprendre l'homme dans un cadre où il quête les signes d'une infirmation du mythe, les descriptions n'ont rien de semblable. Dans le premier cas, l'option « fétichiste » vise à cultiver la différence ; dans le second, l'option « voyeuriste » tend à réfuter la distinction[140]. (572)

The part of Bellon's documentary which is staged as a visit to the legendary writer Colette tends to belong to the second category as it insists on the simplicity of her life more than on the celebration of her literary achievements. Consequently, this part normalizes the author while the embedded retrospective narrative singularizes her. Such contrastive structure constructs Colette's auctorial identity as a form of creation which gradually took place and evolved as her own career evolved and as she herself revised and refashioned this creation.

Thanks to the modern techniques of sound and image, Bellon draws a living portrait of the writer and immortalizes, as this documentary was meant to do, her attitudes and her voice in a way that no other medium could have done. In this sense, she truly performs her role as an "agent de propagation de la mémoire" ("an agent in the propagation of memory", 579) which Nora sees as inseparable from the position of visitor. A ritual in the "culte spectaculaire de la personnalité de l'écrivain" ("spectacular cult of the writer's personality", 582), which was to only become one form of

[140] "Visit: "Investigation, police search in a place so as to find something or somebody" (Littré dictionary). This meaning of the word is revealing: the visit to the great writer is always dependent on the topographical dimension of a visit to somebody's home. In this instance, it is only a matter of "finding something or somebody" but of detecting something that cannot be said in something prosaic – the genius in the familiar setting – or of catching somebody prosaic in something sacred – the naked man in the sanctuary. Depending on whether the visitor comes to admire the writer in a place where he/she seeks the signs of a confirmation of an existing genius or to catch the man in an environment where he/she is on quest for signs Undermining the myth, the descriptions are not similar. In the first case, the "fetishist" option aims at cultivating difference; in the second case, the "voyeuristic" option tends to refute any distinction."

mediatization among others in the vaster postmodern "société du spectacle" identified by Guy Debord, the visit to the great writer took on a new dimension with the advent of cinema. Unlike the preceding media (radio, photography, press), it achieved the ideal of making simultaneously visible and audible "cet écrivain fantôme dont la visite tentait [auparavant] de restituer la voix et de reconstruire l'image" (581). Within the framework of Nora's analysis, a document like Bellon's documentary is, in the same way that Colette's homes are, "un lieu de transmission du patrimoine" ("a site where heritage is transmitted", 584), a locus of national cultural memory or what Pierre Nora simply called "un lieu de mémoire" in its eponymous groundbreaking study. In this perspective, it is all the more striking to see what little importance is, in the end, given to the status of literary author in *Colette*.

Locating auctority in *Colette*

As mentioned earlier, Colette always said that she knew nothing about the technical art of filmmaking. A sign of modesty or a coquetry of a female artist, such a statement hid a real curiosity for the act of filmic creation and very personal conceptions of what could be achieved with the medium. Her confession to Annie de Pène in 1917 that she was writing "un manuscript « par images »" ("a manuscript made of images") for a film (Pichois and Brunet 231) or her experience in semi-autobiographical script writing with *Divine* by which she could write for the cinema while integrating her own spectral image in the film clearly contradict Colette's claim. There is in Yannick Bellon's documentary an allusion to the writer's familiarity with the cinematographic medium

which suggests the existence in her of a creative cinematographic authorship. As she eats her breakfast, Goudeket reminds her of a project that she was asked to approve: the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs wants to make a movie about her. The passage is doubly significant. Firstly, there is the metadiscursive nature of the dialogue that directly refers to Bellon's documentary and the conditions in which it came into being. Secondly, the conversation is what justifies the presence of the embedded narrative in the film. When Goudeket asks Colette what she thinks of this idea, she lightly avoids the question: "je pense que j'ai cessé d'être photogénique" ("I think I'm no longer photogenic"). But when her husband insists, she reveals her intuitive sense for movie making: for her, making a good film about her would imply respecting the chronological order and start with her native home in Puisaye.

Even though Bellon cherished the idea of improvised dialogue, it is difficult not to come to the conclusion that she is responsible for this statement. Modeling her method on Colette's own creative method which blurred the boundaries between fact and fiction as well as author and characters, the young film director transferred her authorship to her heroine, placing her in an ambiguous position within the film by which she could be both author and subject. For the duration of the embedded narrative at least, Colette is identified (notably through her voice-over reading of her texts) as the author of the cinematic discourse. This passage is then presented as a fantasy of autobiography in which the omnipresence of the "I" and the numerous visual evidence stress how Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette authored the writer and artist now known as "Colette".

In 2012, Bellon particularly remembered how Colette had docilely and patiently accepted all her directives during the shooting. In the appended document, she describes how Colette would write original texts in the intervals between quoted passages from her books that the director had left (fig.31). In so doing, Bellon discloses how Colette, the legendary writer that the documentary was supposed to celebrate as an extraordinary figure in French culture, unexpectedly became a co-author of the documentary.

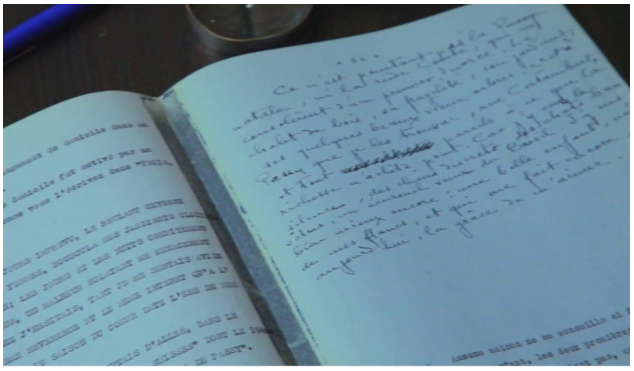

fig.31. Written collaboration

"Je ne m'adressais pas à l'écrivain célèbre mais simplement à une collaboratrice[141]," she concludes. She wanted Colette to have as many opportunities to express herself in her documentary as possible. The willing collaboration of the writer made her wish come true. Thus, in the same way that she had managed to include herself in *Divine*, Colette participated in the authoring of her self in Bellon's documentary. The opening credits testify to her involvement in the writing of the documentary ("commentaire écrit et dit par Colette de l'Académie Goncourt[142]") and so establish her as an author, when the rest of the film, and Colette herself in it, are more elusive about her status.

[141] "I wasn't talking to the famous writer but simply to a collaborator."
[142] "Comments written and read by Colette from the Goncourt Academy."

If *Divine* was an opportunity for the writer to reconsider the music-hall artist in herself, any reference to her literary occupation was however left unreported. The "fantom subject of autobiography" was therefore very selective in this work as only one artistic identity of Colette's was represented. Such silence is actually symptomatic of Colette's attitude toward her writing career. She would generally judge her writings severely and she even said that she regretted having written the *Claudine* novels (Pichois & Brunet 91). She also often confessed that she had difficulties writing although, unarguably, there was in her this urge to expose herself and her life in writing. "Ecrire ! Pouvoir écrire ! Cela signifie la longue rêverie devant la feuille blanche, le griffonnage inconscient, les jeux de la plume qui tourne en rond autour d'une tache d'encre, qui mordille le mot imparfait, le griffe[143]…" she thus famously wrote in *La Vagabonde* about the legendary writer's block (16). Her biographers even suspect that when she started to be successful in pantomime, she may have been tempted to give up the pen for the stage only (159). Colette's ambivalent attitude towards her literary work and her dual career is perceptible in *Colette*.

The presence, in the embedded narrative, of visual documents referring both to her theatrical and literary careers and the testimony given by Colette's former stage partner George Wague, in which he comments on her double vocation, constructs Colette as being equally a theatrical artist and a writer. However, the relative absence of ostentatious signs of literary auctority in the rest of the documentary complicates the

[143] "To write ! Being able to write ! It implies a long daydream in front of the blank page, some unconscious scribble, the play of the pen around an ink stain, nibbling and cratching the imperfect word…"

impression generated by the embedded narrative. On the visual level, only one shot in Colette's home can be interpreted as staging Colette's literary activity (fig.32).

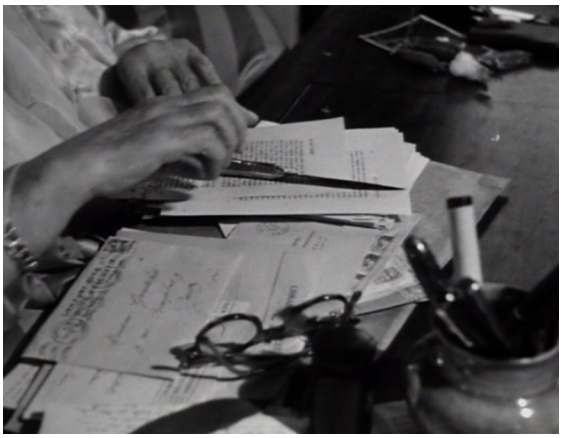

fig.32. The paraphernalia of a woman of letters

This close-up shot shows her seated at her desk on which glasses, a paper-knife, and pages, hand-written and printed are visible. The image certainly constructs her as woman of letters in the strictest sense of the term – a woman who writes but no visual clue indicate that she is the author of literary texts. Although the shot is reminiscent of the numerous images in her personal photographic iconography that portray her writing, there is not much of an auctor portrayed in Bellon's shot. Considering the multimodal nature of cinema, what is not performed with visual means can still be with sound, so what does the documentary *say* about Colette's auctority?

An observing spectator cannot but notice that those who speak the most about Colette's literary talent are actually not herself but other persons appearing in the documentary, George Wague and Jean Cocteau. Wague emphasizes the multiplicity of her artistic identity; Cocteau brings to light Colette's discomfort with her literary vocation and her reluctance to talk about it. In the last scene of the documentary, Cocteau

questions her friend about her massive literary production and her impressive capacity for work but she systematically avoids the questions even if this implies raising contradictions. As stated by the playwright, Colette, the ageing writer, has two taboos: her deteriorating health and her work. She prefers talking about her "idleness"; but she has a very personal definition of idleness: "J'appelle "ne rien faire" me livrer à des occupations nombreuses et différentes … l'oisiveté est aussi un métier[144]." Colette cultivates the art of paradox … and elusive auctority. Rebellious and deeply attached to her freedom, Colette refuses to be confined to one activity and one unique professional identity. When Cocteau accuses her with preferring "l'école buissonière" ("playing hooky from the school"), she confirms that she likes this metaphor. She likes the ideas of transgressing rules, blurring boundaries and challenging limits. Colette's auctorial posture is therefore one of great complexity, one that I would define as "le grand écrivain malgré elle" ("the writer who is great in spite of herself") or the "uncomfortable writer". Identified and recognized as a major French writer by institutions exterior to herself (readers, critics, media), she obviously had some difficulty regarding herself as one if it meant restraining her creativity and being saluted for only one form of writing. Colette's polyvalence and her willingness to constantly explore new directions and new media (theater, advertising, cinematographic script writing, film criticism) may well be symptomatic, as Kristeva and Braudy suggest, of the growing diversification of forms of public display imposed by the advent of celebrity culture. But, above all, they point to two specificities in Colette's auctorial posture. One is her extended notion of what

144 "I call "doing nothing" to indulge into numerous different activities … idleness is also an occupation."

writing is and should be, that is, a transmedia form of creation, hence the particular relevance of the less limiting term "*femme de lettres*" ("woman of letters") to define her posture. The other is her insistence on preserving her freedom, with little regard for what established cultural norms or people of her time deemed as appropriate for writers to be or do. In this respect, Colette's auctorial motto may indeed have been, as Gérard Bonal's biography claims, "je veux faire ce que je veux" ("I want to do what I feel like doing") … "even if it implies endangering or calling into question my own status as an author."

Chapter 3. Media visibility, designation and masquerade: Romain Gary and television

ROMAIN GARY AND TELEVISION: FOUR EMBLEMATIC MOMENTS

1956. Baptism of fire in *Lectures pour tous*

Wednesday, October 10, 1956. The Consul General of France in Los Angeles, Romain Gary is on the set of the hour-long program *Lecture pour tous* to talk about his new and fifth novel *Les Racines du ciel*. It is his first appearance on what is the first talk-show entirely devoted to literature on the single channel of French television. Created in 1953, *Lecture pour tous* is hosted by Pierre Desgraupes and Pierre Dumayet and, every Wednesday night, it broadcasts live interviews of writers of fiction and non-fiction. Soon a reference program, it brings two worlds that are *a priori* unsuited to each other, that is literature, a world of written texts usually enjoyed privately, and television, a communication medium relying on moving images and sound that can be experienced privately or collectively. By giving the floor – or rather the screen – to writers for the first time, *Lectures pour tous* stages "l'épiphanie de l'écrivain" ("the writer's epiphany", De Closets 7) and inaugurates a type of TV show combining portraiture of writers and analysis of their works in a sober style that eventually made the show "la grand messe littéraire de la semaine" ("literature's weekly most important event", De Closets 7). For Gary, who is then more accustomed to TV interviews concerning diplomacy or politics, *Lectures pour tous* is to be a baptism of fire, an opportunity for promoting his work in a

talk show meant to be, according to Dumayet, "la confrontation d'un monsieur et de son oeuvre en présence d'une caméra[145]" (De Closets 38).

After twenty-one minutes of show, Gary's turn has come: his book briefly appears on the screen with the red and white cover that characterizes Gallimard's NRF "Collection Blanche" publications (fig.33). The same close-up shot will reappear about nine minutes later when the interview of Gary by Dumayet is over, with the difference that this last shot will be much longer (almost twenty seconds).

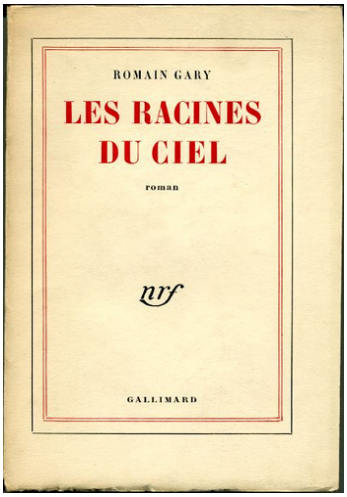

fig.33. *Les Racines du ciel*

These two echoing shots act, in the formal economy of the program, as visual landmarks delimiting Gary's appearance on the show. The organization of the program is such that *Les Racines du ciel* is shown to the TV audience before the *tête-à-tête* talk with Gary starts so that the attention is directed towards the text before the author actually describes its content and explains his reasons for writing it. For the viewer, the text consequently has some tangible reality before it becomes the topic of the conversation between the

[145] "The confrontation of a gentleman with his work in the presence of a camera."

presenter and his guest. Another textual echo is created when the establishing shot that replaces the close-up on Gary's novel reveals the set and its decoration: Romain Gary and Pierre Dumayet are seated face to face and behind the writer stands a remarkable backdrop that represents a giant open book – a most conspicuous visual reminder that *Lectures pour tous* is all about literature (fig.34). If these ornamental pages had been those of *Les Racines du ciel* this aesthetic staging could have been considered the literal materialization of the confrontation of the writer with his book.

fig.34. Gary in *Lectures pour tous* in 1956

Despite this text-oriented beginning, *Lectures pour tous* truly places the emphasis on the writer. The show's trademark is the quantitative *and* qualitative importance given to interviews and to writers' free speech. Lasting around 10 minutes, Gary's interview by Dumayet reflects this ambition to do more than show writers' faces on television. The camera lingers very little on the show presenter. At times, it is even placed behind his back to better record Gary's reaction to a particular question or his answer in its entirety. Dumayet never interrupts Gary but leaves him ample time to talk, even when he does not really answer a question but expresses instead a particular idea of his own; and it is not rare for Dumayet to be even off-camera when he asks a question. This filmic technique

underscores the specificity of the new medium as a dual system: while Dumayet's presence is disembodied and reduced to a sound, Gary occupies the visual space of the televisual picture. The impression is that the host withdraws into the background whereas the guest imposes himself and makes his – visual – mark in the media landscape. Needless to say that, following the creation of the program, writers' performances on *Lectures pour tous* and, more generally, on television will have a significant impact on the construction of their image (Beylot & Benassi 176, De Closets 112).

Romain Gary's image in this 1956 show is certainly one of couth and assertive humanism. Impeccably dressed in a dark suit, the man obviously knows how to carry himself and present his ideas. He seems to be never really destabilized by Dumayet's reputedly tricky questions (De Closets 39) but, on the contrary, to be almost bored at times since, instead of looking straight at his interlocutor, he repeatedly looks about him when being addressed by Dumayet. The diplomat and writer appears not be impressed by the TV journalist. Only his fidgeting with his cigarette and his lighter could betray some signs of nervousness at being on a literary talk show for the first time – or some further sign of ennui. In any case, Gary shows no awkwardness or speech-blocking TV set fright but rather a great ease in promoting his book and explaining what readers should get from it. Rejecting categorically the possibility of a mere allegorical or symbolic interpretation, he confirms that part of the story comes from a personal anecdote (a plane accident when he was in Africa), demonstrates that his fable about the massacre of elephants – "ces géants maladroits, anachroniques, … [ces] individus énormes" ("these awkward and anachronic giants, … [these] huge individuals") – is a speech for the defense of

elementary human rights, including the rights of those who are as poorly adjusted to modernity as elephants, and finally gives his views about the situation of Africa.

Dumayet's questions may guide the conversation but Gary is inclined, in his long answers, to elaborate ideas reaching beyond the content of the novel. Collaborating with, more than simply replying to, the journalist, Gary turns himself into the commentator of his own work and its meaning. His performance on the show is in accordance with the principle of the program as formulated by Dumayet (the confrontation of a man with his work), notably because it presents Gary's own vision of his project in *Les Racines du ciel* and underlines the interrelation between biographical and fictional elements in the novel. His performance also proves that Gary is attuned with his time and the growing significance of media in establishing artistic careers. At the end of the interview, he has delivered to the French audience an image of the writer Romain Gary as both a telegenic and eloquent person, a man who is certainly a diplomat involved in politics but who also is accessible, down-to-earth and for whom literature is more than a temporary pastime.

1969. The confined writer in *Actualité littéraire*

Thursday, June 19, 1969. For a second time that year Romain Gary is Roger Grenier's guest in his weekly TV show *Actualité littéraire*, which, as indicated by the title, is a program on current developments in French literature. Gary has come to present his new book, *Adieu Gary Cooper*, which was originally published in the United States four years earlier. As he anticipated during his first participation in the show in March,

the book was released in May 1969 by his long-time publisher and friend, Gallimard – the same publisher for whom Grenier has been working since 1960. Seated by Grenier's side, Gary, in a ten-minute-or-so interview, introduces the subject of his text (a young American's flight to Switzerland to avoid military service in the Vietnam war), explains his vision of Gary Cooper as a mythological hero representing a bygone age of American history, shares his analysis of the situation of youth in the United States in the 1960s and makes remarks on how he creates characters in his fiction. While answering his host's specific questions about his latest work, the author manages to express his opinions about his time as well as his conception of *auctority* in the practice of novel writing: "tout romancier est acteur" ("Every novelist is an actor"), Gary claims in a laconic sentence that is but one formulation of a creative principle that he was to formulate on many occasions during his career (*Nuit* 255).

The interview ends with Gary questioning the TV host regarding his achievement in *Adieu Gary Cooper* ("je ne sais pas si c'est votre avis, je crois que j'ai assez montré cette vague de révolte qui se préparait sans éclater encore à l'époque[146]") and Grenier nodding in agreement with an ingenious smile : "certainement" ("certainly"). After several minutes of interaction during which Gary dominates the conversation, the program presenter is the one who has the last word and even provides a final word of approbation and legitimation, confirming the quality of the content of the book. The last image, however, is for the writer – and for his book. The picture of Grenier and Gary on

[146] "I don't know about you but I think I have showed well enough the wave of revolt that was brewing but hadn't burst out yet at the time."

the studio set gives way to a close-up shot on the cover of *Adieu Gary Cooper* that marks the end of the interview and of the section devoted to Gary in the show. This moment also marks the withdrawal of the writer as a physical being and the introduction of the writer as a linguistic unit, a name on a cover, which is the visual sign of the attribution of the text to a specific person, although, as Gary's case proves, the reality of this person can never be taken for granted. Literature and the written language indeed allow what television can hardly allow, that is, a complex play on identity and designations through the use of pseudonyms or pen names that exempts writers from exposing their true selves, including their physical persons, in public. While television, especially in its talk shows, needs to exhibit a being of bones and flesh, literature can display only a name, acting like a label for identification, on its products. If writers can disappear behind their books, they cannot hide on television. What is more, television, unlike photography but like the cinema, requires a physical presence *and* a display of oral skills. The presence of writers on television, where "le dire s'accompagne du voir" ("speech goes with sight", Beylot & Benassi 181), is therefore bound to be multi-referential, relying on different modes of inscription that bring together visuality and orality, names and beings, actual presence and more abstract pre-constructed images, that is, all in all, writers as both individuals and sociocultural constructs.

After the end of the interview, the only thing that the television audience can see on the screen for almost ten seconds is the front cover of Gary's eleventh novel to be published in France. After having been the subject of the two men's talk, the object is finally shown to the public, the visual nature of the medium allowing for the

materialization of a text which has so far been alluded to only through speech. The design of the cover is characteristic of the period with deformed, balloon-ish letters, the layout of which contrasts with the sobriety and rectitude of Gallimard's NRF "Collection Blanche" series in which Gary was usually published (fig.33). What the 1969 audience cannot see on their television screens, as TV sets still broadcast black-and-white pictures, is that the design is also very colorful, with words in orange, green and turquoise blue against a white background (fig.35). This up-to-date design can be read as an effort to modernize the image of a writer who has been for nearly two decades a major contributor in one of the most respected and awarded publishing houses in Paris. On a symbolic level, one detail moreover happens to summarize Romain Gary's situation at the time on the literary scene, and more largely in the French mediasphere.

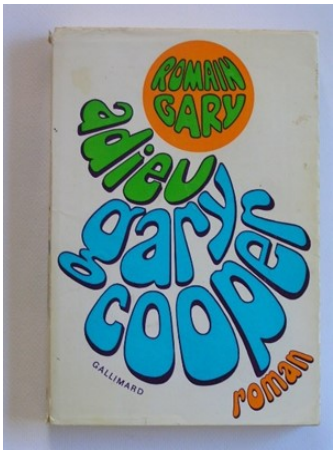

fig.35. *Adieu Gary Cooper*

At the top of the front cover, his name enclosed in a small orange bubble seems to be cramped in a space too small for all its letters, which have to squeeze up to adjust to the circular form. The sphere encapsulating the writer's name is reminiscent of a stamp or a seal authenticating the author of a text but the reduction and compression of the name

that is not given as much space as the title on the cover also evoke Gary's own feeling of claustrophobia at this stage of his career. Jérôme Meizoz remarks about names, "le nom d'écrivain fait *label*, charriant avec lui toute une mythologie de l'auteur[147]" (*Fabrique* 54). At the moment of the publication of the book, the name Romain Gary is undoubtedly evocative of the Goncourt prize, which he was awarded about ten years earlier, of the French Resistance and post-war diplomacy to which he belongs and of a certain international jet-set due to his ties with Hollywood and his marriage to actress Jean Seberg. His relative stardom makes him "someone the public [know] too well already" (Schoolcraft 89). As will be discussed later, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Gary is on the threshold of an identity crisis as he considers himself to be mis-represented and mis-read by the media that focus on his personal image more than on his literary production. The perfect circle on the cover of *Adieu Gary Cooper* illustrates the lack of originality that is attributed to Gary who is seen by many as an author *sans aspérité* ("with no rough bit"), predictable, conventional, withdrawing into himself and going in circles in his creation because "his time [has] passed" (Schoolcraft 2).

Trapped in the restrictive space of a name that no longer secures good sales and with which people other than himself – chiefly the press and critics – have associated preconceived ideas related to traditional dated authorship and low expectations in terms of inventiveness, the writer is however about to burst the bubble in which he has been placed and to expand his auctorial identity. The very title of the novel is incitement to paraphrase Gary's state of mind in this period: "Adieu Romain Gary" could be the code

[147] "The name of a writer is a *label*, carrying with itself a mythology of the author."

name of the writer's literary project at the dawn of the 70s when he started to set up a strategy to counter the simplifying and restrictive effects of significant media exposure. Since the media confined him within predefined roles and identities, he would modify his identity and force them to revise their opinions about him.

1973. The multifaceted writer in *Italiques*

Friday, November 9, 1973. The literary talk show *Italiques*, hosted by Marc Gilbert on the second channel of public television, is celebrating its second anniversary. It is the third time since the beginnings of the program in 1971 that Romain Gary has been invited on the set. In total, he was to be Gilbert's guest four times as he was to be invited again in 1974 to talk about two books that he wrote in this period, *La Nuit sera calme* and *Les Têtes de Stéphanie*. That day however, Gary is on air to present Gabriel Garcia Màrquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Although a program about literature too, *Italiques* is different from *Lectures pour tous* and *Actualité littéraire* in the sense that it does not focus so much on the current events of the literary world (mainly the publication of new books and the distribution of prizes) as on topical themes on which the guests are invited to comment. From a formal point of view, *Italiques* is a collective discussion in which people speak in turn when they want to or are asked to, although there is always a moment when writers are prompted to talk individually in more detail about their most recently published works. These more private conversations, which are often conducted by Marc Gilbert himself, are then comparable to what happens in the

other shows. Another difference is the presence of "co-hosts" in the sense that columnists like Max-Pol Fouchet or Marc Ullmann also present books and interact with the guests during the program. Gilbert remains nonetheless the chief presenter, the one who opens the show by introducing the guests and theme of the day and who closes it at the end (he is also the one whose name appears first in the opening credits and the only one to be credited as producer of the program).

On the set of the November 1973 *Italiques*, Romain Gary is therefore only one guest among others. He is invited by Marc Ullmann to speak first and justify his choice of Màrquez's novel. At the moment when Gary starts to speak his name in small white capital letters appears at the bottom of the screen (fig.36).

fig.36. Gary in *Italiques* in 1973

The deictic function of this visual addition is obvious: it designates and identifies the man on the screen as "Romain Gary" for the viewers who do not know him yet. It is a one-time announcement never repeated in the course of the show even when guests express themselves several times. On the one hand, it introduces the writer visually but somewhat redundantly since he was being filmed by the camera when his name was said by Gilbert

at the very beginning and consequently clearly identified. On the other hand, the reason for the insertion of this label may also be formal as it visually marks the segmentation of the show in different speaking time slots by signifying "*here is Romain Gary who is about to speak for the first time and starts his speaking time in the discussion*". For several minutes, Gary then praises Màrquez's book, making remarks – occasionally with acerbic irony – about the current state of France that is being strongly affected by the 1973 oil crisis. As Gary describes the novel and compares Màrquez with Cervantès and Gogol, the camera, as though to counterbalance the abstraction of a lengthy literary analysis by focusing on a material object, shows close-ups of the book, using the same filmic device as it will again shortly afterwards for Gary's book.

The transition from Màrquez's literature to Gary's is rather abruptly made by Gilbert who suddenly asks the French writer about his recently awarded prize, which a laughing Gary confirms to be a prize awarded by the American *Playboy* magazine to his short story "Les Oiseaux vont mourir au Pérou", which he adapted into a movie for the cinema in 1968. Oddly enough, and probably because the short story was originally published in 1962 in a work bearing another title, *Gloire à nos illustres pionniers*, the book that is shown to the TV viewers is different. The book in question is *Les Enchanteurs*, a novel published earlier in the year that was already introduced to the public of *Italiques* in a previous show in June. The decision to film it instead of *Gloire* can be attributed to the fact that *Les Enchanteurs* is, at this particular moment, Gary's "current affair", that is, *the* book that is to be sold and publicized and the easiest to find in bookshops. Such a choice presupposes nonetheless that the audience is able to opt for the

right interpretation when faced with this non-congruence between image and speech, either because they have already assimilated the codes of both television and *Italiques* or because they watched the June show when Gary's book was first mentioned.

As with *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the book, on the screen, is not exhibited in a straight position as though it was an artwork in a museum or on a shelf in a bookshop but in an oblique position, the position that a book has when, as it turns out, it is held in somebody's hand. A zooming effect also turns a close-up on the whole book into an extreme close-up focusing on Gary's name and face only (fig.37).

fig.37. *Les Enchanteurs*

This shot that visually interrupts the live broadcast of the conversation taking place on the set and discards it off-camera is doubly revealing. It first testifies to a growing sophistication in the filming techniques used in literary TV talk shows that notably attempt to incorporate the book into what takes place on the set – instead of relegating it into the margins of the program as in *Lectures* or *Actualité* where it appeared at the beginning or end of the interview. It also shows how the image slowly but surely has invaded books and publishing practices from the nineteenth century on. If photographs of

Baudelaire were totally absent from his publications, a hundred years or so later, it is indeed Gary's own photograph that adorns the front cover of *Les Enchanteurs*.

The technical progress surrounding the printing of books and the growing inclusion of hand-drawn pictures and then photographs within them have certainly modified the aspect of books between the age of Baudelaire and that of Gary. "Until the late 19th century, the covers of books were usually merely dust wrappers presenting publishers' information about their other wares" (Mullan) but, in the late twentieth century, book covers and dust covers are frequently highly pictorial works that do not hesitate to prominently display the author of the book. Occasionally used at the beginning of the century, photography has become a widespread means of illustrating book covers in the 1960s and 1970s (Mullan) when Gary was definitively making a place for himself on the French literary scene. What TV viewers see while Gilbert addresses himself to Gary is therefore not only a black-and-white rendition of the dust jacket of the book but a photographic portrait of the man himself. The information provided by the image is both pictorial and linguistic, personal and professional, if not commercial, but due to the zooming effect the personal soon takes pride of place. As the camera zooms in, the publisher's name, which is the linguistic sign most strongly connected to the mercantile branding of books as consumer goods, gradually disappears and so do the word "roman" ("novel") and the title so that when the camera stops, what remains on the screen is the face of a man and a name by it, which the viewer cannot fail to interpret as being his name. Paradoxically, while the book is the actual object shot by the camera, the image

that prevails is the image of the individual as though, in the modern image-ridden mediasphere, the writer were always to outshine the text – much to Gary's discontent.

On the level of representations, the appearance of the cover of *Les Enchanteurs* substantiates the idea that the concepts of identity and recognition have been significantly impacted by the development of visual media since the 19th century. After the invention of photography and television, the public's knowledge of writers no longer has to be derived from the act of reading but simply from the act of seeing: even people who are not particularly interested in literature can get to know writers by sight as images of them are spread into the everyday environment through photographs and TV programs. And for those who enjoy reading, the effect is even greater. Because, inevitably, "nos inférences de lecture sont modifiées par [des] savoirs externes[148]" (Meizoz, *Fabrique* 91), readers are inclined to confront the appearance of the individual circulated by media like television with the textual presence that emanates from him or her in the books they read.

The advent of television as a medium that is closely integrated into people's homes (Spigel 1) marks an acceleration in the incorporation of writers into a popular, collective, visual imagination that almost no longer needs books to popularize writers as cultural figures. While, readers, in the past, could only rely on a writer's written and published words to form – and more precisely to imagine – an image of this person and speculate on his or her identity, readers, in the age of television, are provided with a ready-made image that combines the visual and the verbal and gives direct access to the writer. The access to the writer is made all the easier than television is a more proximate

[148] "Our reading inferences are modified by external knowledge."

medium than photography and the cinema: TV programs are directly brought to people when photographic and cinematic works have to be procured outside the home (and it was all the truer when Gary appeared on *Actualité* and *Lectures* in the 1960s when there was still only one channel and movies were not yet broadcast on TV but had to be viewed in theaters). By simultaneously showing writers and recording their speech, television surely leaves a more restricted space for imagination to form an image but it reinforces the status of iconic figure that photography and the cinema started to give to writers in a modern culture more and more obsessed with images.

This inevitable confrontation of representations (incorporeal, speechless, photographic and textual representations vs. embodied, lively cinematic and televisual representations) is emphasized by the camera movement in *Italiques* when Gary's book suddenly appears on the screen. As it includes within the same shot a photographic portrait of Gary and Gary himself on the set, the camera presents the TV viewer with a double representation of the same man that brings together the past reality of a being that *was* recorded by photography (the Barthesian "*ça-a-été*", "it was") and the immediacy of a moment in progress *being* recorded live by television (a contrastive "*ça est*", "it is"). Unwittingly, this splitting of images and the confrontation between a fixed, rigid image formed in the past and a more dynamic, modern image that is in line with the current moment is, in Gary's case, more than an inconsequential televisual gimmick. It epitomizes the tension between the petrified image associated with his literary work and the mobile elusive image that he wanted to convey which characterized the second half of the author's career. The ambition to play with the concepts of designation and identity is

even more blatant one year later during the author's last participation in *Italiques* when he is identified as the author of *La Nuit sera calme* and *Les Têtes de Stéphanie*.

In a show whose theme is the United States and the Watergate scandal, Gary, who spent part of his diplomatic career in the country, is invited to react to the scandal and talk about his new publication, *La Nuit sera calme*, an autobiographical work in the form of a conversation, and about "a surprise," in Gilbert's own words. In accordance with the habits of the show, the camera shows the cover of the book as Gilbert introduces it. The design is a mosaic of pictures in Andy Warhol's Pop Art style using notably photographs of Gary and his family, which could well be personal belongings. Their presence emphasizes the autobiographical nature of the text while pointing to the growing visual publicization of writers' personal lives for the promotion of their work. The photographs used for the cover of this book that displays "Romain Gary" as the author's name are pictures of Gary's past that strikingly differ from the visual representation on the cover of the second book to be introduced on the show. The "surprise" further characterized by Gilbert as a parenthesis in Gary's career is a pastiche of a spy novel, entitled *Les Têtes de Stéphanie* and written by an author called Shatan Bogat… at least this is the information given by the book cover and, as Gilbert explains to the audience, by the back cover of the first edition published in early 1974 that contained a biography of Bogat's eventful life – as imagined and written by Gary. When the show takes place in September 1974, a second edition has already been published with the book cover that is filmed that day on the set (fig.38) after it was discovered in June that Shatan Bogat is actually nobody else but Romain Gary.

fig.38. *Les Têtes de Stéphanie*

Instead of republishing the book with only Gary's name on the cover, Gallimard chose to exploit the literary deception created by Gary so that the two names "Romain Gary" and "Shatan Bogat" are on the cover. Remarkably, however, Gary's name does not appear between parentheses as it is often done to signify the use of a pseudonym. As the audience of *Italiques* can see on their screens, the second cover only refers to Romain Gary indirectly by including it in a stamp from the imaginary Republic of Haddan that was added to the first cover. Building on the black humor and pastiche color of the text, the stamp design somewhat cruelly plays with the image of Romain Gary and the expectations linked to his name. Only classic, canonized, dead writers are usually posthumously paid homage to by their country on a stamp. By giving his backing to this representation of himself as a figure immortalized as a national glory by an unknown country on a five-cent stamp, Gary ironically thumbs his nose at his own public image and at those who regard him as a finished and now secondary author in French literature. With this paratextual visual detail, he goes their way, showing that he is aware of his public image as an author; but with his text, he proves that he can still surprise readers

and critics since nobody guessed from reading *Les Têtes de Stéphanie* who Bogat was and the imposture was only discovered when journalists tried to check Bogat's fanciful biography. Feeling that "his image [was being] taken out his hands" (Schoolcraft 63), Gary, with a clever twist, was attempting to regain some auctorial authority by refashioning his image through the old trick of the pseudonym but was to be inevitably disappointed when "even after revelation of Bogat's name, critics neglected to reexamine the novel's content" (Schoolcraft 97) and to give him credit for his achievement.

This book cover provides the viewers of *Italiques* in September 1974 with one more image of Gary. Comparatively, the photographs of *La Nuit sera calme* were certainly very plain in the end, providing TV viewers and future readers with conventional images of Gary in harmony with his elegant appearance in *Italiques*. The cover of *Les Têtes de Stéphanie* with its ironic staging of Gary's portrait contradicts these images, suggesting playfulness and more complexity in the character than what people can expect from a diplomat who moved into literature and is now old enough to narrate his memories. The image is in any case puzzling enough for the cameraman to focus on it not less than four times during the few minutes devoted to *Les Têtes de Stéphanie* in Gilbert's personal talk with Gary, giving Shatan Bogat and the stamp-representation of the author's split identity on the book cover (two names, one photograph, one face) a significant visual place in the interview. Later the same year, Romain Gary was to give birth to another literary *alter ego*, Emile Ajar, but, this time, the imposture was to be much more complex than the mere use of a pseudonym and the relation to visual media equally more complex. What was to be a liberating change for the writer and a slap in the

face for Parisian critics and journalists became a consuming hoax that would bring both Gary and the literary world face to face with their contradictions. This enterprise at the crossroads of literature and media was to be the ultimate stir in the long and eventful career of a man who became a writer because he "was seeking a *mobile* identity, a means of escaping the institutional grasp (Schoolcraft 159). The revelation of the imposture would also have its televisual treatment, in Bernard Pivot's famous talk show *Apostrophes* but the tone would be less light-hearted and, unlike Emile Ajar, Gary would be conspicuously absent.

1981. The writer in absentia in *Apostrophes*

Friday, July 3, 1981. At 9.30 PM, Bernard Pivot, like every Friday since 1975, opens the 291st *Apostrophes* show on Antenne 2, the new version of the French second channel that was also created in 1975. Pivot's first words are a reminder that, seven months earlier, on December 2nd, 1981, Romain Gary killed himself and at the same time Emile Ajar. The enormity of what happened makes the TV presenter stammer, not so much because Gary committed suicide, but because of what his tragic gesture revealed about himself and Ajar afterwards: "on ne savait pas, on croyait …, on pensait qu'Emile Ajar était le pseudonyme du neveu de Romain Gary, Paul Pawlovitch[149]." Emile Ajar was in fact Romain Gary's own pseudonym. This is what is being made public as his accomplice, Pawlovitch, breaking his promise to keep silent, is publishing a book,

[149] "We didn't know, we believed …, we thought that Emile Ajar was the pseudonym used by Romain Gary's nephew, Paul Pawlovitch."

L'Homme que l'on croyait, where he divulges the truth and Gallimard is simultaneously publishing Gary's confession and own version of the story in the short text *Vie et mort d'Emile Ajar*, written by the author in 1979. The "*on*" that did not know, in Pivot's mouth, undoubtedly refers to the public and the common run of mankind, but it is also more incriminating as it includes a "*nous*" ("we") that refers to the professionals of literature, and more particularly the critics, the specialized press and the TV journalists like Pivot, Dumayet or Gilbert whose job is to publicize literature on television. After this hint of a *mea culpa* pointing immediately at the critics and media's failure, Pivot sums up: "il y a donc eu filouterie sur les noms, une sorte de supercherie littéraire[150]," conceding afterwards that the most essential element of this extraordinary story is that it proves that a novelist has several lives, that every novel is like a rebirth and that literary creation can lead to "des excentricités burlesques et dramatiques" ("extravagant and dramatic eccentricities").

Romain Gary would surely have appreciated the journalist's comment as he himself said nothing else in his interviews and in his books (*Pour Sganarelle* 10, *Nuit* 255 & 322). Pivot's analysis however comes too late for Gary to confirm. Physically absent from the *Apostrophes* set, he is nonetheless the star of the show and his image as well as his voice are to be summoned during the program. One first occasion is the opening credits, just after Pivot's introduction, when five black-and-white photographs of an ageing Gary form a background to the credits. The succession of pictures is not a retrospective chronology of his life therefore but rather a series of recent portraits of Gary

[150] "So, there was some fraud on names, some literary deception."

as the public of the time must have known him, facilitating the recognition of the writer through the identification of his current public physical image. This photographic gallery reads like a visual posthumous homage but also, as claimed by Barthes in *La Chambre claire* (17 & 23), like a substitute to its ever-present referent, to Gary's actual absence on the set. Activating the memory of the author through visual stimuli, this televisual procedure introduces the individual in a ghost-like mode, making Gary an abstraction, a *revenant*, whose reality is now circumscribed to media items like photographs or TV shows that froze his image in the past when he was still alive. For the moment, Gary's presence is a fixed and speechless presence, a reminder-portrait that conjures up the man in a show where his work is supposedly central; but, later in the program, thanks to the technical possibilities of the medium, it is a lively and speaking presence that is presented to the viewers through the insertion of an extract from the previous June 1975 *Apostrophes* in which he participated.

In this show, Romain Gary, the confirmed and (maybe too) well-known author, came to promote *Au-delà de cette limite votre ticket n'est plus valable*, a text about the fear of masculine impotence that it was tempting for many to read metaphorically as a personal confession on the part of Gary that he was facing a decline of his creative power. The image conveyed by the writer on that day was consequently in harmony with the image that the media and literary professionals allegedly had of him at that time. In contrast with his pseudonymous attempt with Shatan Bogat, Gary's strategy in *Apostrophes* was not to contradict and surprise but to confirm and comfort by endorsing the "caricatural version of his public image" (Schoolcraft 78) and thus bringing grist to

his detractors' mill. With the writing and the media promotion of *Au-delà de cette limite*, Romain Gary presented himself to the public in another unprecedented *posture* as defined by Jérôme Meizoz in Bourdieu's wake, that is, an ever-evolving construction that insists on "la capacité de l'individu à renégocier les statuts et les rôles qui lui sont assignés[151]" (*Fabrique* 8). It was a deliberate staging meant both to attract attention to Gary's status as a confirmed author considered to be "*en fin de parcours*" ("at the end of his career", *Légendes* 1406) and to provide an authorial persona that would be a perfect foil for his other secret authorial self of the moment: the emerging, unclassifiable, young writer of literary successes *Gros-Câlin* (1974) and *La Vie devant soi* (1975). One reason for this change of strategy indeed is that in 1975, Gary was already involved in the Ajar adventure and more than ever aware of how he was perceived. In *Vie et mort d'Emile Ajar*, he commented on his status at this stage of his career: "J'étais un auteur classé, catalogué, acquis, ce qui dispensait les professionnels de se pencher vraiment sur mon œuvre et de la connaître[152]" (*Légendes* 1406). In the 1975 *Apostrophes* it was therefore the labelled writer who was performing a predictable and expected role that viewers could see on their screens. They could not be aware, nevertheless, that Gary was cajoling the erring professionals to better protect his rebirth project with Ajar.

In 1975, Gary was talking about himself and his work in the way people expected him and his work to be. In 1981, he is not there to talk but is constantly talked about: his position has shifted from talking subject to analyzed object and, remarkably, it is in the

---

151 "Individuals' capacity to renegotiate the statuses and roles that were assigned to them."

152 "I was a classified, pigeonholed, and taken-for-granted author, which exempted professionals from really looking into my work and knowing it."

second show, when he is conspicuously silent, that the importance of his role in the Ajar phenomenon is revealed as well as the originality of his creation. Unlike the ordinary procedure by which writers come onto the *Apostrophes* set to talk about themselves and about their writings, this particular show presents a writer and his work indirectly by relying on others' testimonies and analyses. Precisely because Gary is absent and silenced, the four guests – Michel Tournier, writer and member of the Goncourt Academy that was deceived by Gary/Ajar into awarding him a second Goncourt prize, Gérard Mendel, a psychoanalyst specializing in investigating the literary creative process, François Bondy, a childhood friend and, above all, Paul Pawlovitch, Gary's cousin (and not his nephew as rumor had it) and accomplice in the Ajar imposture – are in charge of shedding light on the dead author's project and on the author himself. Their speeches, as they reveal the complexity of Gary's personality and ambitions, form a counter-discourse about the writer Romain Gary which oppose the older and more established discourse relayed by the media and critics. It is also a subjective discourse relying very much on impressions and convictions (the four men often hesitate to be assertive) and a revelatory discourse that seeks to unveil the details of a literary fraud and especially the reasons for Gary's double gesture, his creation of Ajar and his suicide.

In the dynamics of this four-voice dialogue, Paul Pawlovitch, the *man* who was introduced to the public in 1973 as Emile Ajar, clearly has the leading role. Because he was part and parcel of Gary's plan and very close to the writer, he is asked to explain and justify the Ajar imposture. After being Gary's straw man and Ajar's body for more than seven years, he is now summoned to appear as a witness and to act as a spokesman for

the dead author. The televisual treatment given to Pawlovitch on the set is also proof of his central importance on the show. On a quantitative level, he is the guest who is most frequently addressed and who speaks most. Also, whereas the framing used to shoot the other guests is generally a somewhat distant frontal head-and-shoulders shot, there is more variety in the shots used for him, and notably more close-ups. The camera is more prone to film Pawlovitch's reactions from a very close angle, like when he is shown mournfully watching the end of the 1975 extract with Gary speaking of "l'allégorie de l'essoufflement" ("the allegory of weakening") (fig.39). The filming is objective and distant with Tournier, Mendel and Bondy but more dramatic and introspective with him as he is supposed to be there to disclose the whole truth about Ajar.

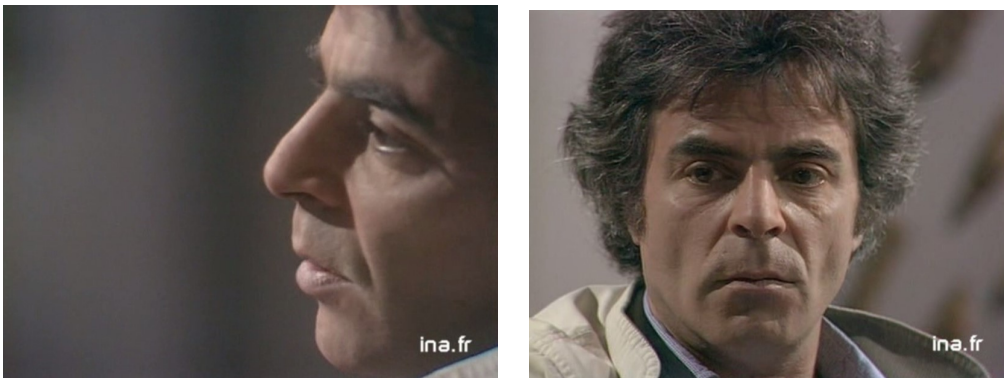

fig.39. Paul Pawlovitch in *Apostrophes*

The filming technique materializes the public desire to investigate and see through the deceptive imposture devised by Gary, and to a lesser extent Pawlovitch. The camera's inquisitive look is a quest for revelation and knowledge that duplicates the public's inquisitive but superficial curiosity towards public figures that Gary problematized in various projects. One remark by Pawlovitch brings forward this aspect of the televisual

"look" while disclosing a sensitivity to exterior perception and the look of others comparable to that of Gary. When, at the end of the show, Pivot asks Pawlovitch why he objected to the presence of an audience on the set, the man answers: "Avoir des yeux dans le dos comme des couteaux, c'était un truc qui m'impressionnait beaucoup[153]." Backing up Pivot and Pawlovitch's words with illustrative action, the camera that is closely focused on Pawlovitch rapidly zooms out into a long shot showing the almost empty set (fig.40) as Gary's cousin-cum-secretary-cum-straw man's last words can be heard: "Il y aurait dû y avoir Romain et *ses* invités[154]."

fig.40. The set of *Apostrophes*

It seems that for Gary as well as his cousin the Ajar story was maybe as much about the self as about the other and the look that other people can shed on you and how this look, when intensified by a wide-reaching medium like photography or television, can shape one's identity, in its individual, authorial or public declensions. The double specificity of this *Apostrophe* show is to present the construction of a posthumous image

[153] "To have eyes like knives in my back was a much impressive thing for me."
[154] "There should have been Romain and *his* guests."

of the writer Romain Gary and to introduce a new but not unknown writer, Paul Pawlovitch, whose book, *L'Homme que l'on croyait*, is precisely about his previous literary experience as the personification of Emile Ajar. In this context, Gary, following the testimonies of Pawlovitch, Bondy, Kessel and Mendel, emerges as a brilliant but tragic authorial figure who was dissatisfied with his own identity, who resorted to fiction and literature to constantly reinvent his auctorial self but also who had no compunction about using and manipulating people to achieve his literary plans. Months after Romain Gary's death, *Apostrophes*, through the presence of Pawlovitch and the absence of Gary reveals the irony of the Ajar imposture. The man who felt claustrophobic in the image and public identity of "Romain Gary" trapped himself into the deception that he created with the pseudonym and then the actual, embodied imposture of fictitious Ajar Emile probably to the point of killing himself while the man who came to be identified by everybody as Emile Ajar has difficulty stepping outside his role and getting rid of his inhibiting false identity to be fully recognized as the individual he truly is, Paul Pawlovitch, cousin of Romain Gary and would-be writer who, because he cannot himself write like Emile Ajar, wrote about Emile Ajar, probably for lack of a more rewarding subject. This moment of 1981 on the *Apostrophe* set is consequently remarkable because it brings together the end of a career and the beginning of a new one[155] that had in common, at some point, to share the same identity.

[155] Although he was the author of several books in the 1980s and 2000s, Pawlovitch was nonetheless never really successful in making a name for himself on the French literary scene.

TELEVISION AND THE AUTHOR IN THE 1950S-1970S

Romain Gary and television: A simultaneous coming of age

These four appearances made by Romain Gary on the sets of French TV programs between 1956 and 1981 reveal as much about the writer as they do about television, about the new medium's relationships with the older medium of literature and about the emergence of an equally new genre, the literary TV talk show. The main reason is that television as a medium and Romain Gary as a writer emerged, evolved and matured at the same time. The relations between Gary and television encompass the various interactions, tensions, and contradictions generated by the confrontation of literature with an additional medium that was to modify the way that society would deliver, present and spread information and entertainment. The technical specificities of television required that new ways of dealing with literature should be found that would exploit the image on the screen as much as the sound and the books themselves as much as their authors. Because the age-old fascination with artists and the creative process was strong enough for French TV people – like people from the press and the radio before them – to investigate, television rapidly got interested in writers, most of the time with the somewhat preconceived and hurried idea that writers were the best suited to represent literature on TV. Gary's career is thus representative of how, after World War II, the writer – that is, the complex amalgamation of an individual, an image, a style, a function in the literary field, etc. – had to take into account the democratization of a medium that required active participation in its programs, not merely as a voice, as with radio, but as a bodily presence.

Suddenly, words and speech, whether written or spoken, were no longer enough: an aura or an attitude was also expected from people whose involvement in the art of literature made them, like it or not, representatives of culture in a society prone to exhibit and spread its culture. The advent of television intensified an urge for representation and performance that had been initiated by photography and confirmed by the cinema. For a critic of the capitalist evolution of Western societies like Guy Debord it also took part in the growing sense of alienation produced by consumer society through the process of spectacle. Even more than literature, television, because it produces and materializes images by showing viewers actual pictures on a screen, is a mass medium and a cultural industry that intensely enacts the notion of spectacle as an ideology linked to economics as well as social relations. Debord indeed defines the spectacle as "un rapport social entre des personnes, médiatisé par des images[156]" (16) and specifies that "le spectaculaire diffus accompagne l'abondance des marchandises, le développement non perturbé du capitalisme moderne[157]" (60). If television conveys these images that mediate relations between people, literary talk shows more particularly provides viewers – and potential readers – with images of writers in a way that confirms the organization of a capitalist consumer society characteristically divided between producers and consumers. The structure of the spectacle theorized by Debord emphasizes the role of writers on talk shows as doers (or producers) of performances that constitute as many images structuring relations between them and viewers/readers.

---

156 "The spectacle … is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images."
157 "The diffuse spectacular goes with the abundance of commodities and the undisturbed development of modern capitalism."

The notion of spectacle also points to the formal specificity of shows that repeat themselves every week and so deliver countless but comparable performances of writers in what is, paradoxically enough, a very constrictive format. The repetition of writers' performances, endorsing the traditional seriality of spectacles in the entertainment industry, underscores the importance of reproduction (reproduction of performances, of shows, of commodities, etc.) in a society where variety, according to Debord, is in the end illusory because it aims at imposing a universal, normalized, commodity-centered way of life. Although on a different level, Debord's criticism echoes Gary's fight against limiting, standardizing practices in the literary world that pigeonhole authors and deny all possibility of evolution. Like Debord's concept of the society of the spectacle, Gary's pursuit of a mobile identity through literary creation, and fraud if necessary, opposes the classificatory principle of a consumer society that imprisons people in predefined roles that limit their freedom and distort their relationships with others. Gary's expanding his artistic identity into the *personas* of Shatan Bogat and Emile Ajar marks his refusal to play the game and keep the same role in the sociocultural spectacle described by Debord and on the French literary scene.

More broadly, Debord's theory of the spectacle is particularly relevant to the situation of writers on television as it articulates representation, perception, social organization and economic dimension in a way that suggests that there is more to writers' participation in talk shows than the mere necessity for them to appear and exhibit themselves to satisfy the public's curiosity and guarantee sales. For writers, agreeing to appear – whatever the "appearance" taken on (Meizoz would say "posture" instead) – in

the spectacle of literary talk shows means positioning themselves in the literary field as well as the economic and media fields. Writers appearing on television are part of a spectacle that not only seeks to show literature and disclose its secrets to the uninitiated but to sell it and promote it as one of the cultural pillars of modern advanced society. In the case of literature, the desire to *see* the creators of the literary cultural products indeed goes with a desire to advertise the cultural products themselves: showing writers on television was also a way of bringing literature to the viewers and, eventually, more culture to the masses when television became an indispensable feature in French homes.

At first very institutional in nature since television, as a national public service provider until the 1980s, was significantly concerned with the pedagogical and cultural quality of its programs (Blumler 11-12), this desire was nevertheless not wholly disinterested but rather partly commercial – and it became increasingly so as French television changed. When television started to broadcast literary talk shows in the 1950s, literature was already more than a form of creation and the commerce of texts as well as the affiliation of writers to publishing houses made literature a flourishing business in France after the crisis of World War II (De Closets 115) and a site of many stakes as critics and the press acted then as powerful trendsetting agents, influencing sales numbers and the recognition of literary achievements. For Sophie De Closets, "ce sont alors les ténors de la presse écrite qui font la carrière d'un ouvrage et détiennent un réel pouvoir sur le niveau des ventes[158]" (116). Romain Gary, at the time when he invented Bogat and

[158] "The big names in the press are those who, at that time, gave a book a career and had a real power over sales numbers."

Ajar, held a particular grudge against this Parisian *République des Lettres* ("Republic of Letters") that had for long categorized and almost forgotten him. If he chiefly used his medium, literature, and more specifically fiction, to deceive them and expose their incompetence and partiality, he, who was very soon in his career exposed to media attention, also relied on media exposure to set up his literary impostures, including through appearances on television.

Gary's participation in TV talk shows from the 1950s on epitomizes therefore this distinct moment in media history when literature and television came to converge, if not collide, into the ambition of TV people (program directors, journalists, producers, etc) to make programs about books and those who write them, in a way that would surely compete with what other media like the press and radio already did but that would, above all, exploit the specificities of the medium. Romain Gary, starting his writing career right after World War II, belongs to a generation of writers, like Albert Camus, André Malraux, Henri Troyat, or Marguerite Duras, who saw their careers bloom after the war concomitantly with the popularization of television and the development of French television into various institutions and agencies managing the transmission and production of programs (RDF, RTF, ORTF, TF1, Antenne 2, etc.). In this context, Gary's televisual destiny reflects one possible writer's response to the emergence of the new medium – one that consists in embracing the medium, adapting to it and using it for one's own purposes. If some writers, like Samuel Beckett, Jean-Paul Sartre, or Simone De Beauvoir balked at appearing in talk shows like *Lectures pour tous* and its ilk, others, like Henry de Montherlant or Elsa Triolet, were willing to attempt the adventure of being on

television but were not tremendously comfortable in front of the camera, especially in the first years of the medium as De Closets notices: "dans les années cinquante, la télévision est encore confidentielle, peu regardée. Les écrivains sont assez ignorants de ce nouveau média[159]" (113). In the 1960s, television was no longer an experimental enterprise but a must for writers who aspired to be recognized as such. It does not mean however that all writers, although more familiar with the medium, were necessarily more comfortable with showing themselves to the public and performing on a TV set. Fortunately for Gary, he was among those who, from the very beginning, showed a significant ability to behave and speak in front of the camera – which must surely have proved an asset to appeal to viewers/readers, especially at the start of his career when it was crucial for him to make himself known to the public.

Even though Romain Gary started to write pieces of fiction at an early age, his career truly began in 1945 with the publication of a novel that was an instant hit, *Education européenne*. In 1945, television had been available for more than two decades but its technical beginnings dated back as far as the end of the 19th century[160] – the most significant landmarks of the history of French television being the opening in 1927 by the government of the time of the first national broadcasting service, the first French transmission of an image through an emitter (and not a wire) between studios in Malakoff

[159] "In the 1950s, television is still a barely distributed and watched new medium. Writers are fairly ignorant of it."

[160] The information related to the chronology of French television history in the coming paragraphs are extracted from Jérôme Bourdon *Histoire de la télévision sous de Gaulle*, Pierre Miquel *Histoire de la radio et de la télévision*.

and Montrouge in the Parisian suburbs in 1931, the creation of the first weekly, hour-long, black-and-white television program, "Paris Télévision" (which was transmitted to the hundred or so television receivers existing in various public services) the next year, and the creation of the first daily programs, which from January 1937 on, were available for the few hundreds homes owning a television set from 8.00 to 8.30 PM. After the war broke out in 1939, the development of French television was – like many other aspects of the national cultural life – brought to a standstill as German occupation authorities reserved for themselves the use of television.

The end of the war in 1945 marked the beginnings of a time of renewal, affecting all fields of life, including literature and the media. Televisual experimentation and the expansion of transmissions on the national territory were resumed; traditional rituals of cultural life, such as prize-giving ceremonies and festivals, were restored with new ones being established, like the Cannes Film Festival founded in 1946 or the *Prix des Critiques* that Gary was the first to get for *Education Européenne*. Simultaneously, the nationalization of all means of radio and television broadcasting in 1945 under the RDF ("Radiodiffusion Française") banner established a state monopoly that lasted until 1981. It often meant tight governmental control over TV program content, despite the subsequent transformations of the RDF into the RTF ("Radiodiffusion-télévision française") in 1949 following the official creation of the unique French TV channel and then into the ORTF in 1964 as an attempt to give more autonomy to radio and television, which now included a second channel in color. In many respects, as things started to take off for Romain Gary, so they did for television and as it became more and more complex

for writers to make a career for themselves without taking into account realities external to the literary sphere like interviews, photo shootings or TV appearances, television itself became a more and more complex and sprawling medium involved in this request for higher visibility for writers.

The four extracts considered previously illustrate how Gary's career was contemporaneous with the above-mentioned changes, which cannot have failed to impact the way literary talk shows were made and their treatment of literature. During his televisual career, so to speak, Gary experienced technical changes such as the shift from black-and-white to color pictures or from live to recorded shows; but also structural changes with the creation of a second channel that introduced the possibility for viewers to choose the programs they watched (and so initiated the tyranny of viewing figures and fierce competition between channels) or the successive restructuration phases of the national broadcasting institution and the editorial and political changes they entailed. Gary's familiarity with the medium was, at one point at least, perceived to be so great that he was appointed policy adviser in the office of the Minister of Information, Georges Gorse, in 1967. The appointment was in direct relation with the ORTF and was described at the time by Gary in these terms: "Je suis chargé de repenser les problèmes à long terme[161]" (*Cahier* 37). In *La Nuit sera calme*, he later acknowledged that accepting the job was a disappointing mistake. He who confessed "Je voulais briser les reins de la Commission de censure qui sévissait alors d'une manière éhontée[162]" (*Nuit* 153) did not

[161] "I'm in charge of rethinking problems in the long term."
[162] "I wanted to break the censorship board that was wreaking havoc in a most brazen way."

manage to minimize the effects of the yoke of strict governmental control on television as he hoped to do. This experience, nevertheless, certainly made him, more than any other writer, keenly aware of what was at stake in television in the 1950s-1970s period, beyond the mere functions of representation and popularization.

Interestingly, Romain Gary's literary career also coincides with two phases of the history of French television as conceptualized by Patrick Tudoret in *L'Ecrivain sacrifié. Vie et mort de l'émission littéraire*. Considering this history from the specific angle of the medium's treatment of literature, Tudoret traces a genealogy of the "*émission littéraire*" ("literary talk show") that enables him to distinguish three successive phases between the 1950s and the beginning of the 21st century. Building on Umberto Eco's concept of "paleo-television" (1983), Tudoret similarly calls "Paléo-Télévision" the foundational pioneering era of television, from the 1950s to the late 1970s, when literary talk shows began to appear and to establish the codes of what was to become a remarkable genre of French television: "C'est dans la Paléo-Télévision, cette « télévision de papa », grande aïeule en noir et blanc, codifiée, controlée (dépendante des pouvoirs politiques, chaîne publique à ses débuts…) qu'a pu germer, peu à peu, le principe de l'émission littéraire telle que nous la connaissons aujourd'hui[163]" (16). In this period, while structuralist theories in the wake of Roland Barthes's "Death of the Author" claim advocated the primacy of the text over its writer, TV programs devoted to literature gave pride of place

---

[163] "It's within Paleo-Television – this black-and-white ancestor and « old-fashioned television », codified and controlled (being a public channel depending from political powers at its beginning) that the principle of the literary talk show as we know it today could gradually sprout."

to writers and gain their legitimacy through their capacity to attract established, respected authors on their sets.

A golden age of television, "Paléo-Télévision" was supposedly made for all spectators and sought to execute the implicit contract of being a cultural window onto the world (16). Its literary programs had for some time a very limited audience but nonetheless a significant impact on literature and writers by counteracting the undermining of the figure of the author enacted by university scholars and critics. Romain Gary's participation in "Paléo-Télévision" programs falls within the framework of this dynamics that saw the concurrent theoretical death of the author and his/her televisual resurrection. For Tudoret, the flagship program of this era is *Lectures pour tous* as it laid the foundations of the genre as a form of "célébration liturgique" ("liturgical celebration" 34), "une passerelle culturelle" ("cultural bridge", 35) that set on a pinnacle the writer, "celui – *a priori* anti-spectaculaire – dont on va sonder la parole, la vie, le corps jusqu'à en faire une incarnation sublimée du texte[164]" (34). Gary, on several occasions, appeared in *Lectures pour tous* and, as I tried to bring forward at the beginning of this chapter, his performance on the show – with the emphasis put on his very person and eloquent speech in the interview and on the biographical source of his writing as a prolongation of his life – indeed reflects the new importance given to the author on television, for want of sustained consideration in the literary theory of the time.

[164] "The one – *a priori* anti-spectacular – whose speech, life and body are to be probed, to the point of making him (or her) a sublime embodiment of the text."

If the beginning of Gary's career coincides with the inauguration of "Paléo-Télévision", the end is definitely inscribed in the advent of "Néo-Télévision". For Tudoret, at the end of the 1970s – a critical period for Gary himself as he was torn between a declining career under his own name and a pseudonymous imposture that was slipping out of his control – a new phase in French television history was engaged. Television had reached maturity; literary shows were common occurrences on the French TV screens; the audience was now familiar with the medium and its language (70); and the ORTF had been broken down into various autonomous institutions separating radio and television, which now offered three different channels to the viewers. In short, the stage was gradually set for what was to culminate in the 1980s, that is, the multiplication of programs, the proliferation of advertising, and the advent of private channels after the end of the state monopoly over television broadcasting in 1981 (70). For Tudoret, the establishment of a new framework went with the emergence of a new state of mind that he deplores: "la Néo-Télévision parle de moins en moins du monde extérieur. Elle se contente de parler d'elle-même et des liens qu'elle institue avec son public[165]" (71).

In this perspective, Bernard Pivot's introduction to the *Apostrophes* show devoted to Gary, when he almost apologized to the public for having been deceived by the writer ("on ne savait pas", "we did not know"), surely sounds differently. Markedly self-reflexive, this remark sounds like a sign of the "Néo-Télévision" egocentrism denounced by Tudoret. It suggests that, amidst the tragic drama of the Gary/Ajar masquerade, what

165 "Neo-Television is less and less about the exterior world. It is satisfied with only talking about itself and about the links it establishes with its audience."

prevails in the end is television's reaction to its own gullibility and incapacity to expose Gary's deception. Tudoret's pet peeve in this period of self-celebration and specular constriction (71) is precisely Pivot's *Apostrophes*, which he sees as both the climax of the literary talk-show genre and the beginning of its decline. *Apostrophes*, according to him, relied on a "principe de valorisation croisée qui aboutit à une sorte de prééminence paradoxale du médiateur-interprète [Pivot] sur le créateur[166]" (88). Pivot indeed became a star of French television and was seen as the big boss of literature on TV, somebody who could make careers and destroy them as easily. Tudoret reproaches him with lacking genuine interest in the literary quality of texts and the show with its tendency to focus on individuals more than books: "le livre, soudain, … n'est plus le sujet, la matière même de l'émission, mais devient le prétexte à une promotion des individus;" (88) "c'est l'ère des « bons clients » et des réseaux[167]" (87).

A "*bon client*" of television in general, Gary was not a "*bon client*" of *Apostrophes* as he was invited only once when he was alive before being the subject of the posthumous show mentioned in the first part of this chapter. In the late 1970s, when *Apostrophes* gathered momentum, Gary was no longer in the public eye. He who was so skilled at talking about literature and analyzing its workings and effects, in the very way that Desgraupes and Dumayet tried to promote with *Lectures pour tous*, that he probably no longer fitted the mold of a television that was much centered on itself and more and

166 "A principle of cross-valuation that leads to a sort of paradoxical preeminence of the mediator-interpret over the creator."
167 "Books, suddenly … are not the subject, the matter of the show, but becomes a pretext for a promotion of individuals;" "It's an era of « good clients » and networks."

more prone to "*télévoyeurisme*" and "*téléexhibitionnisme*" (166), to exposing the individual more than the creative self. Let us remember the introductory words uttered by Pivot on the show about the late Gary and Ajar and about the media's incredulity ("on ne savait pas"), they seem to confirm Tudoret's demonstration that with "Néo-Télévision" programs such as *Apostrophes* a new era had begun where the content of literature would be given less attention than authors' personalities and lives and how efficiently they could perform on TV. Romain Gary's fate on television appears to be indicative of the evolution of television and more specifically of the literary talk show genre after its inception in the 1950s. Nevertheless, before considering in more detail what makes the literary talk show a specific TV genre in France, how it indeed evolved from *Lectures pour tous* to *Apostrophes* and how it constituted a meeting point for literature and television, it is necessary to portray Romain Gary, the man and, above all, the author so as to better explore his relationships with television as part of his auctorial *posture*.

"Saisir Romain" (Blanch 6): Portrait of a protean author in post-war France

Chameleon, enchanter, comedian, juggler, picaro[168] – are only a few designations used by Gary's biographers and commentators to portray him (sometimes in direct reference to what he himself wrote). These designations connote a captivating, bold, versatile, creative and, above all, elusive personality. In view of his bibliography and *curriculum vitae*, it is indeed not excessive to describe Romain Gary as a volatile and

[168] See Myriam Anissimov, *Romain Gary, le caméléon* ; Céline Ther, *Gary enchante Ajar*; Christophe Pérez, *Romain Gary. La Comédie de l'absolu.*

multitalented man. He himself justified his quest for variety in terms of temptation ("La vérité est que j'ai été très profondément atteint par la plus vieille tentation protéenne de l'homme: celle de la multiplicité[169]," *Légendes* 1410) and his very biography reflects the preoccupation of a writer who was much concerned with the notion of identity and how to express it. He rejected strict categorization and the confinement into a reductive immutable self. On a personal and creative level, he may also have experimented the destabilizing effects of a society in search of renewal and new cultural models.

After World War II, France went through a reconstruction phase and an identity crisis that were not only socioeconomic but also cultural in which many models and values inherited from the past were questioned and eventually left behind. Gary's fate in post-war France illustrates the magnitude of the mutations taking place at the time when the country was entering a new age after losing its bearings. "Les Trente Glorieuses[170]" during which his career both flourished and started to wane are synonymous with major changes, including changes related to literature and its commercialization. His literary production and his place in the mediasphere of his epoch notably demonstrate how the articulation between fiction writing and the public promotion of the self of the author that was already perceptible in Colette's time became even more tenuous. For somebody like Gary who was prone to re-invent his public self as a way to have more control over his

[169] "The truth is that I've been profoundly affected by the oldest protean temptation of man: that of multiplicity."

[170] "The Glorious Thirty" or the 30 years following the war (1945-75) is regarded as an exceptional prosperous period in France which, thanks to considerable economic growth, saw the improvement of the standard of living, the consolidation of consumer society's habits and the renewal of French culture, notably influenced by the growing circulation of American cultural products at first imported by GIs during the war.

social interactions, a context of mutations was a challenge forcing him to constantly act to keep control and be part of the literary scene. By adopting pseudonyms and devising the Ajar imposture, Gary certainly intended to secure for himself a privileged place in French literary history, if only because of the originality of his ventures, but he also pushed the limits of a traditional conception of *auctority*, showing that in the second half of the 20th century authors, more than ever, author texts *and* images of themselves that expand beyond their writings, in what can be considered a paratextual mediasphere, that is, a multimedia space that surrounds the production and consumption of literature.

If Colette used and abused her own biographical data, bringing her literary creation close to the fields of autobiography and autofiction, Gary invented biographical data for himself so as to produce not so much literature as auctorial selves that would allow him to fully express his creativity and need to step out of himself. He appears to have been immersed into a dynamic process of constant self-fashioning in which literature is included as a means to intensify the inventive play with one's image and try out different identities. It is one of the objectives of this chapter to demonstrate that television too became involved as the French writer took advantage of the new medium to relay his literary enterprises. This dynamism places Gary in the category of authors who display an array of *postures* and whose career is a trajectory structured by a succession of "façonnements de soi" ("self-fashioning acts", Meizoz, *Postures* 18) informed by the "interaction permanente avec la rumeur du monde" ("permanent interaction with the rumor of the world", Meizoz, *Postures* 11). On the one hand, Gary typically resorts to existing historical postures (the use of a pseudonym, for instance); on

the other hand, he takes into account the reception by the public and the professionals, adjusting his postures to react to the evolution of literature in his time (hence the invention of Ajar). In this sense, Gary's career exemplifies the double nature of literary postures noted by Meizoz as he states that "chacun investit singulièrement un répertoire postural déjà présent [mais] la posture est un fait d'individuation[171]" (*Postures* 26-7).

Like his hero, Don Quixote, who vainly tilts at windmills, Gary's effort to continually refashion his self can nonetheless appear hopeless when reading Meizoz's remark that "l'oeuvre constitue une représentation stable de l'auteur périssable pour la postérité[172]" (20). The ideal of total and controllable elusiveness by which no one would figure out his authentic self behind the *personas* he invented might have driven Gary's obsession with fashioning his own identity; however, if we go by Meizoz's analysis, the very nature of literature, recorded in writing and surviving its author, was to counter his strategy by revealing points of stability in his personal *scénographie*. Thus, after the disclosure of the Ajar mystification, several critics pointed out the recurrence of similar linguistic gimmicks in works signed with Gary's name and the texts published by Ajar (Lafon & Peeters 309). Even the writer, exhausted and disillusioned, acknowledges, in his last writing under the name of Ajar, *Vie et mort d'Emile Ajar*, the limitations of literary impostures and the difficulty for writers to really hide themselves behind textual deceptions: "Je ne crois pas qu'un « dédoublement » soit possible. Trop profondes sont les racines des œuvres et leurs ramifications, lorsqu'elles paraissent variées … ne

[171] "Each writer draws from an existing repertoire of postures in a singular way [but] adopting a posture is an act of individuation."
[172] "An author's works constitute a stable representation of this author who is perishable for posterity."

sauraient résister à un véritable examen et à ce qu'on appelait autrefois « l'analyse des textes[173] »" (*Légendes* 1412). Gary was surely too aware of the power and longevity of literature to futilely believe that using different identities could be enough to satisfy some aspiration to discretion or some sort of *insaisissabilité* ("unseizability"). Furthermore, his willingness to accept media exposure proves that he did not so much try to lead people astray as to guide them along a path where they would have no other choice but recognize the vast range of his talents.

I would argue that instead of seeing Romain Gary's trajectory as a discontinuous incoherent succession of postures whose only common thread was a desire to avoid being exposed and categorically defined by others, considering his trajectory as a deliberate, continuous, creative exploration of the self through various media and strategies offers a more insightful perspective on his appropriation of the various mechanisms that come into play in the construction of an authorial self. I suggest therefore to favor the conception of a cohesive "auctorité plurielle" ("multifaceted auctority", Meizoz, *Postures* 25) by which Gary pushed the boundaries of literary creation and interrogated the place of the author in it in a period when literary creation was like never before under the scrutiny of other media over that of a random fragmented *auctority* ascribable to a fear of being decrypted and fixedly labelled by others. If there was a form of fear at the origin of his unconventional protean literary career, it surely was a fear of limitation – a limitation of his possibilities, recognition and success.

---

[173] "I don't believe that any splitting of the writer [into various identities] is possible. The roots of works are too deep and their ramifications, when they seem varied … cannot resist a real examination and what used to be called "text analysis.""

From the very beginning equivocality was to be the hallmark of Romain Gary's life. Born Romain Kacew in 1914, the exact date and place of his birth are already shrouded in ambiguity. It took place on May 8 according to the Russian pre-1917 Julian calendar but on May 21 in the Gregorian calendar, in a town called Vilna in the Russian Empire, which became Wilno in Poland between the two world wars and then Vilnius in Lithuania. He was raised by his mother, Mina, in Russia, Poland and finally France where they settled down in 1928. As for much of the information concerning his origins, Romain Gary was very vague about his father's identity and about his first years, going as far as giving wrong or distorted information in his interviews or public statements. He seems to have lapsed into self-invention and autofiction very early in his life as part of his effort to continually transform his image. The son of a Jewish merchant, he fantasized for example that his father was the Russian silent film actor Ivan Mosjoukine and lied about his mother's nationality. Prone to adaptive personal storytelling, Gary turned a conventional process of "*auto-narration*" (by which he would merely narrate his personal history) into "*auto-fabulation*" (Meizoz, *Fabrique* 54), or the narration of some imaginary yet supposedly biographical elements. He did so in his life when he was still an unknown individual named Romain Kacew as well as in his public life when he became famous. For Meizoz, this dispositive "permet à l'auteur de s'écarter des données biographiques … (demeurant inconnues du public) et de les infléchir vers une posture adaptée à l'espace des possibles littéraires du moment[174]" (*Fabrique* 54). Even before

[174] "Enables the author to take distance from biographical data … (which remain unknown to the public) and to re-orientate them along the lines of a posture that is adapted to the current range of literary possibilities."

becoming an author, Gary resorted to practices characterizing writers' attitude in their field, but when he himself started to write fiction and to perform as an author, this tendency to hybrid self-fabrication, mixing truth and fiction, took on a new dimension as it strongly influenced the way he positioned himself into an auctorial posture.

Romain Gary, like Colette, used his own life as material for his writings. As he explained to Dumayet in *Lectures pour tous* in 1956, his novel *Les Racines du ciel* was inspired by a plane accident in which he was personally involved in Africa. Other texts among his later works also draw inspiration from moments of his life: his Hollywood days with Jean Seberg are the backdrop to *Chien Blanc* in 1970 while *L'Homme à la colombe* in 1958 is a satire of his experience at the UNO – although because of his diplomatic status the book was officially attributed to a certain Fosco Sinibaldi, making the text an unusual mixture of real experience and fictive authorship. Things were clearer – in appearance at least – when Gary decided to turn to autobiography. He was 45 when he published *La Promesse de l'aube*, an account of his childhood and youth in which his mother plays an important role. To promote his book, Gary participated a third time in *Lectures pour tous* in May 1960 and the anecdotes that he told Dumayet on the set are *verbatim* the ones narrated in the book; ten years later in the show *En toutes lettres* that was devoted to the relationships that writers have with their mothers, he repeated them back almost word for word – like a lesson well learned. These particularly dramatic anecdotes, which are all about his mother's high ambitions for him and her demanding education that was meant to make him somebody special, are impossible to verify but they are important in the sense that they contribute to building Romain Gary's personal

legend and the origins of his auctorial self. He regularly claimed that, because his Francophile mother believed in an extraordinary fate for him and was convinced that he would become a French ambassador, a Nobel prize winner or the new Victor Hugo (Brenot 171), he actually embarked on diplomatic and literary careers. The autobiography written by Gary is clearly Romain Gary's autobiography and not Romain Kacew's. As a result, this individual, outshone as he was by the author's reinterpretation of himself, might well remain a complete mystery.

In his autobiography and in the discourses surrounding it in the media, he describes the early stages of a process of *auto-création* ("self-creation") that initiates the birth of a writer called Romain Gary who was destined to be somebody. A first foundational auctorial posture is outlined in this retrospective portrait of a young East European boy who becomes an adult on the battlefield fighting for France's freedom while trying his hand at writing to achieve his mother's dreams: it is the gestational phase during which the future author starts his trajectory by evolving socially from poor despised immigrant to war hero and budding writer. Romain Gary was still Romain Kacew when he wrote his first texts before the war broke out (*L'Orage* and *Une Petite femme*, two short stories published in 1935) and then enlisted in the French army. While writing *Le Vin des morts* between 1933 and 1937, he himself noticed the decisive significance of the moment: "Pour la première fois, je sentais que j'étais devenu « quelqu'un » et que je commençais enfin à justifier les espoirs et la confiance que ma

mère avait placés en moi[175]" (Brenot 152). As he tried to have the manuscript published, he also tried two pseudonyms at least. Convinced that "un grand écrivain français ne peut pas porter un nom russe[176]" he chose François Mermonts and then Lucien Brûlard – an obvious allusion to *Vie de Henri Brulard*, the unfinished autobiography written by Henri Beyle, who also went by the pseudonym of Stendhal (Brenot 178-9) – but gave up both. It is truly after immersing himself in the French culture and joining the French resisting army that Romain Gary, Romain Kacew's first and most durable *persona*, was born.

A short transition period was the use, between 1940 and 1944, of the intermediary name Romain Gary de Kacew, it was his *nom de guerre* in the French resistance and the first appearance of the suggestive term "Gary" in his official designation. This name that was to be his professional signature had everything to satisfy the fabulist. Reminiscent of Gary Cooper, to whom he devoted his text *Adieu Gary Cooper* and who represented for him a glorious age of American history, it drops a hint at an ideal of the Western world for which the soldier was fighting; but for those familiar with Russian, it is also a variation on "gari" the imperative form of the verb "to burn" and a possible reference to his Eastern roots. Later, the writer would perpetuate the Russian connection when electing Ajar as his final pseudonym – "ajar" like "partly open" in English but also like "embers" in Russian. It is nevertheless under the symbol-ridden name of Romain Gary that Romain Kacew reached fame and literary recognition. Under this name, he became a

[175] "For the first time I felt that I had become « somebody » and that I was finally justifying the hopes and trust that my mother had placed in me."
[176] "A great French writer cannot bear a Russian name."

diplomat, a writer, a Goncourt Prize winner and a celebrity – all of them being statuses closely linked to his professional career.

By adopting a name different from their own, writers not only put on a mask behind which they can hide but also adopt a branding name that will identify them as producers of particular cultural goods. As demonstrated by the insertion on the screen of writers' names in the 1973 extract from *Italiques* (fig.42), these few words identify a person but, for readers, they also contain a horizon of expectations connected to style, genre, and possibly story. By getting familiar with the name Romain Gary, readers also familiarized themselves with his *universe*, a whole world constructed by the writer through literary creation. In the specific case of Romain Gary, who accumulated pen names, these, Philippe Brenot argues, are not arbitrary identifiers meant to guide (or misguide) readers but an integral part of the same evolving entity whose every change of identity is a stage in the construction of the self:

> La prise de ces noms successifs a beaucoup intrigué, mais plutôt que de pseudonymes, je trouve plus juste de parler d'hétéronymes en ce qui concerne Gary car, à l'instar d'un Pessoa aux soixante-douze identités, le nom d'emprunt n'est en rien un artifice mais plutôt une étape, ou une facette, de l'histoire personnelle, chaque hétéronyme ayant une trajectoire propre contribuant à l'équilibre intérieur[177] (176-7).

In Romain Kacew's trajectory as a writer, the pseudonym Romain Gary is the name by which the media and the world would identify him in the public sphere. Initially, Romain Gary is the elegant diplomat-writer and war hero on the set of the October 1956 *Lectures*

[177] "The successive name changes caused much interrogation but, to be more precise, I'd rather use heteronyms instead of pseudonyms when it comes to Gary because, as with Pessoa, who seventy-two identities, the cover name is no artifice but rather a stage, or a facet, in a personal history, as each heteronym has its own trajectory contributing to the inner balance."

pour tous, that is, a man who lived through war, who wrote about it (*Education européenne*, *Le Grand Vestiaire*) and who is now involved in international affairs. With the passing of time, and his appointment as Consul General in Los Angeles that led him to get acquainted with stars from Hollywood and to wed Jean Seberg, Romain Gary's image evolved and his auctorial posture was affected by it.

The encumbrance of one's own image

A regular participant in TV shows and interviews[178], a well-known *vedette* ("celebrity") whose picture was frequently visible in newspapers and magazines, including tabloids, Romain Gary's media exposure, in the 1950s and 1960s was at its height – a situation which surely did not displease the writer as he reputedly was unable to resist publicity (Blanch 105). Primarily embarked on an official diplomatic career, which was already in itself a career centered on representation, Gary as a successful and cosmopolitan cultural figure was therefore very much involved in a process of representation that he could not always control. Media coverage of his personal and professional lives meant that the act of representation was mediated by others who did not necessarily perceived him as he was or he wanted to be. If Romain Gary was invented to fulfil an ideal of his mother's, the writer soon considered that the critics, the press, and the media in general were literally "disfiguring" his *persona*: the critical gaze of these powerful others froze him into a dated auctorial posture that insinuated that he was

[178] The INA archives listed 46 appearances in TV shows for Romain Gary between 1956 and 1980 for French television only.

finished as an author ("Romain était un auteur "marqué," évalué, jugé, classé et souvent condamné depuis longtemps[179]" Pawlovitch 55) – possibly because, in their minds, the over-exposed, polyvalent socialite had precisely replaced the inventive literary creator.

The list of Gary's "peripheral activities" (Schoolcraft 12) is in itself impressive and revealing: resistance fighter, aviator, civil servant, diplomat, consultant, autobiographer, playwright, reporter, filmmaker, script writer, are all occupations that he had in addition to being a novelist. The variety of his professional and social identities suggests a multitalented man but they also contributed to tarnishing his reputation by undermining his credibility as an author – probably because the long-standing myth of the literary genius requires that an author should be wholly devoted to literature and only literature, and although, historically, many writers, including Baudelaire and Colette, were involved in other activities. Very perceptively, Pawlovitch underscores Gary's lucidity on this particular point:

> « Je veux écrire un livre nouveau… quelque chose de complètement différent … Si je publie sous mon nom, on va descendre le livre, immédiatement. » Il évaluait justement les penchants et les jugements sommaires de la petite société parisienne. Il avait l'habitude. Un petit monde où l'on tolère beaucoup de choses, mais pas les échappées hors du contexte. C'est en effet de la solidarité professionnelle que l'on exige de la part de chacun[180]. (55)

Gary's hyperactivity destabilized the act of strict identification by which media like the press or television tend to limit identities into stable and easily recognizable identifiers. It

---

[179] "As an author, Romain had been "marked", assessed, judged and often condemned for some time."

[180] ""I want to write a book that is new… something completely different … If I publish it under my name, the book will be immediately lambasted." He rightly appraised the tendencies and the summary judgments of the small Parisian world. He was used to them. It was a small world where a lot was tolerated but not an occasional escape outside this context. Professional solidarity was indeed required from everyone."

was often misinterpreted as a mere survival reaction to remain visible in the media when it was already a symptom of his need to step out of his self and free himself from any hindrance, and especially the superficial image that the media and the critics had associated with his name.

Interestingly, Gray called "la gueule qu'on m'a faite" ("the visage that was attributed to me", *Légendes* 1405) this misinterpretation of himself. He did not refer to his reputation or his name as it could have been expected in French but he chose to emphasize the visual aspect that was now necessarily attached to writers' status on the cultural scene. A man of letters by definition, the writer in post-war France is no longer only a name, a writing style and a literary universe but also an image, in which the physical appearance and the attitude had also their importance. For Gary, who was not totally comfortable with his physical appearance (notably his hands which he deemed too small and his nose that was broken during the war, *Nuit* 231), this aspect of his reception as an author and public figure was always sensitive. Because of his constant media exposure during his career, Schoolcraft considers Gary "mediagenic" (79) and the writer's appearances on TV talk shows where he appears at ease and overall stylish confirm that there was at least something telegenic in him. However, as he reached his fifties, his fear of ageing and losing his seduction power, exacerbated by the metaphorical degradation of his auctorial image by the media, led Gary to seek self-renewal again – and this time this renewal would go further than inventing a new pen name.

The beginning of a change is already perceptible in *Italiques* in 1973. At 59, he no longer has the stiff elegance of his appearances in *Lectures pour tous* and *Actualité*

littéraire: his hair is longer and unruly and his tie is loose. Rid of the rectitude that goes with a high-level administration position, the writer displays a more laid back attitude that is also attuned to his time. It is yet other facets of himself that are shown on the covers of *Les Enchanteurs* and *Les Têtes de Stéphanie* (fig.43): while he exhibits his Eastern roots like never before with his Cossack's black hair, beard and moustache on the former, he is almost unrecognizable on the latter. According to Paul Pawlovitch's memories, it was also a period when Gary would often give up formal suits like those he wore on the sets of *Lectures* and *Actualité* for Oriental garments or all-leather outfits (52 & 86), that is, clothes most adequate for a Turkish adventurer like the imaginary Shatan Bogat. Analyzing this new "pseudonymous tactic," Schoolcraft contends that Gary, "reflecting upon [the] mimetic relation between author and text," adapted Bogat's character to his text so that his new falsified identity was subordinated to his literary mission: "Bogat's authorial persona – sponge diver in the Indian Ocean, tracking down black market arms traders – was in fact created in the image of the exotic espionage novel he was supposed to have authored" (97). Undeniably, the writer's latest evolutionary change was still very much of a literary exercise comparable to the invention of a character for a novel. It implied, as before, creating a linguistic and even literary self that was enclosed in a pseudonym (Bogat) and a fiction (*Les Têtes de Stéphanie*) but also, and that was new, in a biography, a characterization of the writer and a summary of his life as imagined by Gary. This pseudo-biographical matter was made available for the publisher at first and then for the reader on the back cover of the book – until it was discovered that Bogat was Gary. Suddenly, what was to be another *persona*, another mask, gained some

more depth by being endowed with its own personal (his)story. In this sense, Bogat was another extension of Romain Kacew's autofictional construction, but his existence was still only verbal and therefore immaterial. Logically, the next step for Gary was to expand the masquerade from purely textual creation to embodied imposture.

When Gary participated in *Italiques* in1973 and 1974, he already had in mind another project that would be even more elaborate and radical in its exploration of *auctority* and its resistance to identity restriction in the media. What is characteristic of Gary's "strategies of mobile identities" (Schoolcraft 79) is that they are always intricately interwoven with his writing practices. They go beyond a mere narcissistic preoccupation with one's individual's public image and are anchored in a more theoretical reflection on *auctority* that Gary saw as necessarily spreading outside the text and outside the act of writing itself. With his theoretical essay *Pour Sganarelle* in the mid-1960s, Romain Gary expressed his conception of literature in which he considered the writer as a servant to a novelistic creation that should be total and not totalitarian in the sense that the novel should reflect the multiplicity of life against a reductive universalist vision that is detrimental to man and to literature as it confines them both to systematic models. Until the end, Gary stuck to this theory, although it was poorly received, and claimed the author's right to multiplicity if not duplicity. He was saying nothing else when he told Grenier in *Actualité littéraire* in 1969 that novelists are actors or when he insistently claimed in *Italiques* in 1973: "Je crée des personnages parce que j'ai besoin de ne pas être moi-même … quand j'écris un roman, je cherche à m'éloigner le plus possible de moi-

même … J'écris des romans pour cesser d'être moi-même[181]." His justification for writing a mock spy novel under the fictitious name of Shatan Bogat a year later rehashed the same ideas as he confessed that he wanted to start all over again like a beginner in order to "se débarrasser de sa peau, partir dans une nouvelle direction" ("to get rid of his skin, to set out in a new direction"). At the dawn of the 1970s, what was at stake for Romain Gary was a complete self-reinvention that would both materialize his conception of what an author should be (and could do) and prove to his detractors that he was right in electing this direction.

By claiming that writing and, what is more, writing under pseudonyms allowed him to "get rid of his skin," Gary, once more, resorted to a physical metaphor to describe his literary practice in an age when "his skin" as a public cultural figure was very much exposed in the media. The growing pressure put on authors so that they would make themselves visible to the public seems, in his particular case, to have exacerbated his desire to perform his *auctority* by projecting himself into his characters as an actor would do. However, what distinguishes Gary is that this projection of himself into the fictional in-text characters that he invented was not enough so that he rapidly projected himself into pseudonymous authorial selves that he would equally invent. He expanded the idea of "*roman total*" ("all-encompassing novel") to "*oeuvre totale*" ("all-encompassing production") by expanding fiction beyond the limits of the text into the paratext. What makes the enterprise even more singular is that he even had the ambition to give his

[181] "I create characters because I need to be somebody but myself … when I write a novel, I try to move away from myself as much as possible … I write novels to stop being myself."

fictional authorial a*lter-egos* earthly bodies, that is, bodies that could embody his impostures in public and in the media. This was a central aspect in the Ajar affair and the explanation for Paul Pawlovitch's involvement in it. What Gary underestimated though was that human beings are more than mere earthly disposable bodies and that they usually already have identities, civil statuses and real lives before taking on pseudonyms.

For Schoolcraft as for Pawlovitch, Emile Ajar did not come out of the blue but was the ultimate stage in Gary's long-standing flirtation with doubles and his obsession with merging literature and life. "Presque vingt ans que les choses étaient déjà esquissées. Depuis *Les Racines du ciel* … Dans ce livre, le héros, Morel, rencontre sur son chemin plusieurs doubles. Des bons et des mauvais[182]" Pawlovitch remarks (61) while Schoolcraft notes that at the moment when Gary invented Ajar he "was still seeking how best to conflate his literary and media practices for a new stage of creative self-renewal" (93). For Gary, Ajar had therefore to personify the merging of literary creation and real life that would allow him to extend his creation through the existence of a pristine, unknown double that would not suffer from the *a priori* judgements that crippled Gary on the public scene. Ajar as a literary strategy was consequently a revenge on the media and a fantasy of split auctorial identity brought together, with the noticeable attribute that Ajar, unlike most pseudonymous *alter-egos* invented by writers, was not an entity solely made of paper and words but an embodied entity. Gary, with the collaboration of Pawlovitch, eventually achieved the improbable, that is, to give birth to an author with an

[182] "All this had already been detectable for almost twenty years – since *Les Racines du ciel*. … In this book, the hero, Morel, along his way, comes across several doubles, good or bad."

identity (Ajar), a body of works (*Gros-Câlin*, *La Vie devant soi*, etc.) and a corporeal self (Pawlovitch's physical appearance). Ajar can be regarded as the ultimate stage in Romain Gary's (or Romain Kacew's) trajectory as an author because he materializes his success in accessing a new dimension in the construction of an authorial self. His endeavor to come out of his skin and evade his identity by expanding his authorial self into a double was nevertheless not immediately successful.

As soon as 1958, most probably because his diplomatic status encouraged him to do so, Gary had already tried to hire a man called Pierre Ouraliev – living in England under the name Pierre Rouve – to embody his fictive double Fosco Sinibaldi but had failed in the end. Resorting to a slightly different strategy in 1974 for his autobiographical text *La Nuit sera calme*, the writer used his childhood friend François Bondy as the tangible embodiment of the character of the interviewer in this fictive dialogue that was entirely written by him, questions and answers alike. In Ajar's case, there were even more complex reasons for the use of a man of straw than with Bondy and Ouraliev. Ajar/Pawlovitch was, from the beginning, meant to be more than a literary device, or a mere "borrowed name" ("*prête-nom*"): like Ouraliev, he was meant to be a "borrowed embodiment" ("*prête-corps*") but with a specific mission. Gary wanted to appoint somebody who would provide his textual invention with a real palpable physical appearance but also somebody who would give him a second youth. This man was to make him forget about his ageing appearance and his unfashionable reputation: through him, he was to start a new career, explore a new form of literary style (as he had already started to do with Bogat), and initiate a new relationship with the critics, the media and

the public at large. Ajar was to be a remedy against his frustration with the literary and media fields, an outlet for his rejuvenated literary activity and an acme in his literary career proving that he was still able to invent interesting fiction. In a sense, Ajar was an amazing success and a daring thumbing of the nose at the literary world of the time: his books were immediate hits with the public and the critics and he was awarded the Goncourt Prize in 1975 for *La Vie devant soi*, making Romain Gary the only French writer who received it twice.

The Ajar imposture represents in Gary's career the triumph of the author as a creator and the fulfilment of his ambition to rub shoulders with the authors that her mother described as ideals to emulate, like Balzac or Stendhal whose *Comédie humaine* and *Vie de Henri Brulard* testified to their aspiration to produce out-of-norm literary works. In accordance with the title of his 1973 novel *Les Enchanteurs*, Ajar's creator confirmed that the storyteller who had been writing stories for forty years or so was also an enchanter, a professional deceiver, an illusionist who was able to mystify even the professionals in his trade. In this sense, Gary exemplifies the auctorial posture of the writer as a demiurge, a universe maker with many powers who fashions beings and their environments, including in their most physical dimension. The assimilation of such a polymorphous writer with an enchanter or illusionist also ties in with Guy Debord's theory of the modern society as being a society of the spectacle in which genuine life has been replaced by a representation of it. By creating various pseudonymous *alter-egos* for himself, Gary produced appearances or representations of himself as an author that contributed to the "spectacularization" of literature and of society at large. Each *alter-ego*

(Gary, Sinibaldi, Bogat, Ajar) was a new image by which Romain Kacew mediated his relationship to the exterior world and his positioning as an author. The determination of his auctorial posture was consequently very evolutionary and based on the principles of multiplication and expansion. Like a story that develops into various storylines or a spectacle that unfolds into several acts, Gary's multi-layered representation of his auctorial self not only expanded, to use Madélénat's terminology, his own "biographoid nebula" ("galaxie biographoïde") but made his strategies of self-representation a complex spectacle prone to mesmerize the public. However, if the Ajar affair reveals Gary's extraordinary talent for storytelling, media deception and hoax making, it also reveals the other – darker – side of the coin.

With the publication of *Pseudo* in 1976, Gary, trapped between the schizophrenic authorship of Gary's and Ajar's works and the paranoid anguish that Pawlovitch/Ajar could definitely overshadow him, took the lead of the game again. His pseudo-autobiographic account of Ajar's nascent career and subsequent breakdown leading him to stay in a psychiatric clinic weakens the aura of a writer who was considered a possible figurehead for the renewal of French literature. For Lafon and Peeters, because Gary narrated events that he had not himself witnessed but were told to him by Pawlovitch, who had actually lived them, the writer gave a crucial twist to the mystification: "Gary-Ajar redevient le maître du jeu, en se réappropriant les pieces qui lui avaient échappé et en faisant sien le materiel inventé par Pawlovitch[183]" (302). The extent of the imposture,

[183] "Gary-Ajar becomes again the master of the game by re-appropriating pieces that had escaped from his control and by making the material invented by Pawlovitch his own"

the progressively degrading relationships between Pawlovitch and Gary, the stress on a strict legal framework determining Pawlovitch's role (Lafon & Peeters 300), the publication of *Pseudo* in 1976 and above all *Vie et mort d'Emile Ajar* in 1981 after the writer's death (although it was written as soon as 1979), a book in which Gary discloses the fraud and claims his authorship of all Ajar's text – all of these elements reveal Gary's obsession with control and his tendency to act like a puppet-master manipulating the people around him for his own interests, including his writing and career. Pawlovitch's account of the Ajar imposture in *L'Homme que l'on croyait* hides nothing from this character trait in Gary: "il [Gary] utilisait tout ce que je lui avais confié d'espoirs personnels, d'échecs, de ratage humiliants. Chaque matin, je … tapais les preuves de mon inanité[184]" (196). It also summons Jean Seberg's testimony as a confirmation of the writer's need to subject people to his will and absorb them into his universe.

> Plus tard, lorsque dans *Pseudo*, Romain m'eut dévoré au profit de son personnage Ajar et que je me sentais alors très mal dans ma peau, Jean vint nous voir à la campagne … « Tu sais Romain est un ogre. Regarde comment il a osé me traiter dans *Chien blanc*. Il ne faut pas nous laisser faire. Il va bouffer tout le monde[185]. » (31)

Such confession incites to revise Gary's auctorial image as a demiurge and to compare him to mythical and tyrannical Cronus who ate his offspring out of fear of being dethroned by them. Dethronement may indeed be an appropriate metaphor to describe Gary's anguish of being deprived of his creation and of his high position as an established author. Almost all of his biographers agree that Gary was himself "*dévoré*"

---

[184] "He [Gary] would use all personal hopes, all failures, all humiliating mistakes that I had confided to him. Every morning, I would … type the evidence of my insignificance."

[185] "Later, when in *Pseudo* Romain 'devoured' me for the benefit of his character, Ajar, and I felt very bad, Jean came to visit us in the countryside … 'You know Romain is an ogre. Look how he dared treat me in *White Dog*. We should not let him do or he will eat up everybody."

("devoured") by his last creation, the enormity of the deception and Ajar's dazzling but overshadowing success being in the end too much too handle and too disturbing for the survival of his own identity. The whole of Romain Gary's auctorial trajectory portrays an author bigger than life who, from an early age, had high ambitions and a taste for storytelling attracting him to mythomaniac invention, autofiction and fiction writing. Accordingly, his propensity for impostures and pseudonyms was an element of his literary creation, a means to be more efficient in his task to literally enchant people and hold them in his power. Living in an age when the work of an author implied not only writing and publishing stories but promoting them and appearing in the media, Gary had to take into account the emergence of the latest tool that had the power to captivate the public as much as literature. The last section of this chapter focuses therefore on how the writer appropriated the new TV genre of the literary talk show – as he had with the spy novel for his Bogat pseudonymous attempt – to fashion his authorial self in the media and, more importantly, to consolidate the Ajar imposture when being Romain Gary suddenly became a strategy not to be Ajar.

ESTABLISHING A NEW TELEVISION GENRE

The literary talk show as a site of media convergence

Romain Gary's multiple participations in literary TV shows between 1956 and 1980 are as many insights into the evolution of French television between these two dates, with *Lectures pour tous* and *Apostrophes* as two crucial benchmarks illustrating the

changes that underpinned the shift from "Paléo-Télévision" to "Néo-Télévision" described by Tudoret. The extracts considered in this chapter expose more especially the particularities of the early development of the literary talk show as a distinctive program genre in the foundational years of "Paléo-Télévision" and how the presence of authors on the small screen raised questions about literature and television and about the risks and advantages of combining them into the form of a TV show. The very existence of literary talk shows on television illustrates Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of the modern social space as divided into fields – here, literary field and media field – that interact with one another although these interactions are often fraught with competition (*Règles* 179). They confirm the inevitable interpenetration of practices in a context of expansion of the cultural field in which media, cultural products and their producers growingly come into contact. By bringing literature on the public scene on a wide scale, television in the twentieth century not only contributed to the acceleration in the circulation of literary products but to the convergence between the literary field and the media field that intensified the connections between television, publishing and intelligentsia (Beylot & Benassi 173). The structural change brought about by the invention of the television medium induced new power relationships between media, between journalists and authors, between authors and publishers, and even possibly between authors and readers. As it shall appear in this section, authors and TV journalists were not the only ones to be involved in the construction of literary talk show history since radio, the press and the publishing trade also made significant contributions, notably by providing television with people with

remarkable expertise in literature when television was still in its infancy and did not have specialized professionals at its disposal yet.

When television started to take an interest in the possibility of devoting air time to books and writers, literature had already been on French radio for some time. Writers were regularly asked to express themselves through "the nation's voice" (Hilmes, *Radio Voices* xiii) to say a few words about their new book or about some literary event taking place, or more notably to take part in long serial interviews ("*entretiens-feuilletons*") whose purpose was to get from writers "a verbal creation in the presence of the microphone" thanks to improvisation (Héron 10). Jean Amrouche's serial interviews of authors such as Gide, Colette, Mauriac or Giono on the public state-owned radio from 1949 on remained a major milestone and a model for those who subsequently undertook to interview writers, whether on the radio or on a TV set. Another important, though short-lived, stage was Pierre Desgraupes and Pierre Dumayet's first collaboration on the radio show *Domaine Français* in the mid-1940s as this weekly literary program on the current developments of French literature was to lay the groundwork for their future *Lectures pour tous* show on television.

As it exploited the same structural formula that consists in the succession of one-to-one interviews with writers, *Domaine Français* was already a sort of *Lectures pour tous* for Dumayet, who believed that there was not fifty ways of talking about literature on radio anyway, while, for Desgraupes, what counted most was their common conviction that "il fallait transposer, avec les moyens de la radio, la structure d'un magazine spécialisé, comme le *Magazine littéraire*, la spécificité de la radio étant la voix,

on a choisi de privilégier la formule de l'entretien[186]" (De Closets 14). Desgraupes's remark sheds a revealing light on the continuity characterizing the genealogy of media in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and how each new medium fed on pre-existing technologies to better find its own modalities. The radio, when necessary, drew inspiration from what the press did and television in its turn looked at the radio when in search for a model to emulate[187]. In the introduction to Bernard M. Timberg's *Television Talk*, Horace Newcomb remarks that the longevity of the TV talk show genre relies on "its status as an efficient and effective commodity [as] it is relatively cheap to produce [and] often extremely profitable when successful" (ix). Like any talk-oriented programs, whether on TV or on the radio, the talk show indeed makes use of an elementary inexpensive resource which is human interaction through the act of conversation – a resource that radio had already largely exploited as a medium entirely dependent on sound only. It is then no surprise that budding television, although it combined sound *and* pictures, should have tried to adapt such type of basic but well-tried, cost-efficient programming to its own specificity at an early stage when it was still a modest enterprise looking for adequate content.

---

[186] "The structure of a specialist magazine such as the *Magazine Littéraire* needed to be transposed using the means offered by the radio. As the specificity of the radio was the voice, the form of the interview was favored."

[187] At this point, after having considered photography in Baudelaire's time and the cinema in Colette's, I myself would expand this network of influences outlined by Desgraupes by adding the proximities existing between painting, photography, cinema and even drama. Baudelaire's photographic portraits and Colette's dealings with cinema showed how nascent photography and cinema positioned themselves relative to painting and performing arts by borrowing techniques and practices like the use of light or compositions inspired from *tableaux vivants* – not to mention the fact that the cinema was also indebted to its photographic ancestor.

Timberg confirms the filiation between TV talk shows and radio by placing the genre in the wider context of "television talk" as "a set of principles that governs all talk on television" and that directly emerged from decades of radio practices centered on speech and its transformation into an audible, attention-grabbing performance and therefore into a program that could be successfully broadcasted. TV talk is "unscripted yet highly planned and invariably anchored by an announcer, host or team of hosts. It is based on what sociologist Erving Goffman calls 'fresh talk': talk that appears to be spontaneous, no matter how planned or formatted it actually may be (3). Within this framework the TV talk show program appears to have the difficult task to preserve the illusion of unguided, unprepared talk while the literary TV talk show, as an even more specific program, should both preserve this illusion and make accessible to viewers a literary discourse (possibly elaborate or theoretical but also merging the textual content of books with their authors' own oral speech) that is the very essence of its subject – not to mention the necessity for television as a highly visual medium to make talk visible or rather, in a even more demanding way, *watchable*. All in all, the talk show program genre was certainly an easy model to import on the condition that it should be in the hands of people who could handle these various parameters.

Dumayet and Desgraupes's double experience in radio and television points to the actual transposition of practices that shaped the literary TV talk show as a successor to what was done on radio and in the press, that is, a medium-specific transcription of the act of conversation, the management of the literariness of the subject topic and the adoption of a particular posture by the interviewer. For each of these aspects, television

had to find ways of its own to both do the basic expected job (communicate about literature) and make the most of the medium's potentials. As the two journalists acknowledged, their work on *Domaine Français* trained them in the technique of the interview as well as in, simply, journalism (De Closets 14). It was one thing for them to learn how to lead a conversation with a writer on his or her art but it was another to learn how to behave as journalists (and what is more as TV journalists) and to find their style or signature so to speak – to sum up, a prejudice in favor of non-interfering guidance leaving as much space to the interlocutor as possible. If being on the radio helped them sharpen their professional competences, it also opened for them the doors of a fairly secret small world which was that of French post-war publishing. Both men had been trained in philosophy at the university and were meant to embrace a teaching career but, following their experience on the radio, they definitely turned to journalism and literature. Their popularity as presenters of a radio program on literature enabled to them to get familiar with the publishing world as well as that of literary magazines, to which they sometimes contributed afterwards. According to Sophie De Closets, Dumayet and Desgraupes in this period "se vivent davantage comme des observateurs et des acteurs du monde littéraire que comme des journalistes à part entière[188]" (14). The relative indeterminacy in their professional identity (were they radio hosts, journalists, or critics?) when they were about to start *Lectures pour tous* characterizes most of the profiles of the people who laid the foundations of television as a medium and of the literary talk show as a genre. None of them were specifically trained to be TV professionals; rather, they came

[188] "Regard themselves as observers and actors of the literary world rather than full-fledged journalists."

from different horizons (if not media) and turned themselves into pioneers of the new medium, bringing with them their knowledge and experience of what was done in these other professional environments.

Another example of the growing interpenetration of media in the age of the invention of television is thus the status of Roger Grenier, who hosted *Actualité littéraire* on the set of which Romain Gary was invited in 1969. A writer and novelist himself, Grenier had no cause to be envious of Gary's polyvalence as, in addition to anchoring *Actualité littéraire*, he was a radio animator, a writer for the cinema, a journalist in the press and a reading committee member for the Gallimard publishing house. Unlike Dumayet and Desgraupes, Grenier was, before dealing with literature on television, a confirmed journalist and an insider in the French literary sphere. It was therefore to a genuine man of letters, and to a peer, that writers invited on *Actualité littéraire* talked when facing Grenier. *He* knew from personal experience what the actual writing process was like and how things were carried out when it came to being published and to promotion. Grenier was however no exception; Max-Pol Fouchet, who was a commentator on both *Lectures pour tous* and *Italiques*, also had the same multi-talented profile associating occupations related to literature (including novel and poetry writing) and media. Dumayet, Desgraupes, Fouchet and Grenier may embody the advent of the "intellectuels journalistes" ("intellectuals-cum-journalists", Beylot & Benassi 174) who, after World War II, became media professionals and powerful spokesmen for culture catalyzing the mediatization of intellectual debates in French society (Peroni 51) but Grenier more specially typifies the contribution that the pre-existing literary world, and

publishing in particular, made to the construction of the literary talk show. With his double belonging to public television and Gallimard, he exemplifies the ties between television and publishing houses, especially big houses like Gallimard, in a preliminary period when possible conflicts of interests were apparently not deemed a problem.

The appearance of literary talk shows on French television also coincides with a growing professionalization, within publishing houses, of the management of the relationships between writers and the rest of the world, between literature and other media. Lagging behind the United States, press or media relations in France really emerged as a strategic power in France after World War II, precisely when the popularization of television strongly impacted the way literature interacted with other communication media. Although at the time of the launching of *Lectures pour tous*, press agents did not necessarily accompany writers during their televisual experience, it became more common for them to assist their clients and even go with them on the set in the later years, as did Léone Nora, a press agent for Gallimard in the 1960s, or Claude Dalla Torre, who worked successively for the press services of publishers Julliard and Flammarion in the same period (De Closets 34). Dumayet and Desgraupes's willingness to meet writers, as well as their press agents when they were present, before the show (if only to make them more comfortable with the televisual medium) testifies to the close collaboration that could exist between television and the literary world at the time, when commercial stakes were not yet as essential as the cultural promotion of literature. Twenty years later, during the reign of *Apostrophes* as *the* reference program, things were already different. Bernard Pivot categorically refused to meet authors, or their press

agents, before the show and he also refused all promiscuity or compromise with publishing houses and media relations services. In the same period, Gary, who had worked as the spokesman for the French delegation for the media service of the UNO in New York (*Nuit* 180), showed the same mistrust towards press agents. So as to not compromise his Ajar project, he never shared his secret plan with his publisher Gallimard and the media relations service there.

With the shift from "Paléo-Télévision" to "Néo-Télévision", the developments of television as a mass medium and literature as a mass product, the rising criticisms that such evolution roused, and the decisive importance that adequate media coverage took for authors' careers, the power relationships between media, television, literature, journalists and authors took new dimensions, saturated with stakes linked to economy, marketing, sales numbers, and recognition that gave literary talk shows and their presenters much power and confirmed television's centrality in the crucial commercial media promotion of books and writers over the promotion of literary achievement and prestige. One major characteristic of the literary talk show genre is that, by definition, it was meant to be a convergence point for literature and television, and more largely for the literary and media fields and, as such, it quickly became a site where the novelties, tensions and redefinitions induced by the modernization of the means of production and circulation of culture were highly visible and debated.

What place for television in French literary culture?

In her biography of Romain Gary, Lesley Blanch notes that, by the time her ex-husband was considered a confirmed writer, television had become a necessary showcase ("une vitrine nécessaire" 6) for writers to attend if they wanted to be fully recognized as such. In 1967, 57% of French households had a TV set and 51% of the population watched TV everyday; 20 years later, both rates had risen to 94% and 82% respectively (Peroni 20). Between the moment when Gary published his first book and the end of his career, television had consequently reached a status of near hegemony in the dissemination of information, entertainment and culture in the country. This culmination is concomitant with the advent of "Néo-Télévision" when the models set up during the first phase of literary talk show history were revised in the sense of greater privatization, wider channel competition and, therefore, bigger commercial preoccupations (Tudoret 70-2). If, by the end of the 1970s, the genre definitively had its place on TV, the appearance of such programs initially raised questions about how television, the epitome of the modern mass-medium, would affect the old institution that literature was.

For Jason Mittel, "television genres matter as cultural categories" (xi) "best understood as a process of categorization that is not found within media text, but operates across the cultural realms of media industries, audiences, policy, critics and historical contexts" (xii). Key to his approach is the idea that "genre distinctions and categories [are] active processes embedded within and constitutive of cultural politics, pointing to how media engage with and shape our culture" (xii). Along the same lines, Horace Newcomb and Paul M. Hirsch in "Television as a Cultural Forum" describe television as

a communication medium imparting information as well as an aesthetic object that has become a social ritual "offering a metalanguage, a way of understanding who and what we are, how values and attitudes are adjusted, how meaning shifts" (48). Mittel, Hirsch and Newcomb underline here an important aspect of television, that is, how the medium is anchored in the wider and ever-evolving structure of culture. The growing hegemony of television and the success of literary talk shows in postwar France consequently prompted considerations on how these phenomena could relate to other existing practices linked with literature and so reflect how these evolved to respond to the modernization of culture. As Peroni concludes, the question of the relations between literature and television "ne se [réduit] pas à la question d'une simple concurrence entre pratiques, elle a bel et bien la culture elle-même pour enjeu[189]" (7). In this respect, Paula S. Fass is indubitably right when she characterizes television as "a cultural document" (37): so what do the existence and success of literary talk shows in Romain Gary's time reveal about postwar French culture?

It is commonly considered that the popularity and longevity of literary talk shows in France (*Lectures pour tous w*as broadcasted every week from 1953 until 1968 and *Apostrophes* from 1975 until 1990) is a cultural exception, which itself reflects the uncommon status given to culture and artistic creation in the country. When it comes to literature and its reception on the public scene, France has a long tradition of conversing during literary gatherings. From the "*salons*" popularized in the 17th century to the various "*cénacles*" emerging in the 19th century, the custom of meeting to debate about

[189] "Is not limited to a mere competition between different practices: culture itself is at stake."

literature and ideas has always been a favorite occupation among "amateurs des belles lettres" ("book lovers") and writers alike. I would contend that literary talk shows belong to this tradition and are a reinterpretation of the literary gathering adapted to the emergence of a new audio-visual medium that would enable to publicize the developments of literature on a wide scale by expanding the circle of people attending the debate. If only the actual participants in the programs are, of course, able to actively take part in the conversation, viewers can nonetheless, without leaving their homes, watch and listen to the discussions taking place on the set and so get informed and form personal opinions. Such a televisual experience can even incite them to purchase books and, possibly, read them.

The view that literary talk shows primarily enact a dialogue between different actors of the literary field echoes the more general idea of television as a cultural forum promoted by Hirsch and Newcomb. The genre particularly exploits television's aptitude to contribute to "the collective, cultural view of the social construction and negotiation of reality, [to] the creation of what Carey refers to as 'public thought'" (46). The comparison with a forum puts emphasis on television's quality as a medium where ideas and views can easily be exchanged but one remark by Bernard Pivot reveals another role played by the medium through the existence of the literary talk show genre. Commenting on the simultaneous publication of seven books on death in September 1977 and the relevance of choosing a thematic organization for *Apostrophes*, the TV host concludes:

> je me rendais compte de toutes ces lignes de force de l'édition qui faisaient, qu'à un certain moment, des gens traitaient le même thème. Ce n'est pas une volonté des éditeurs, là aussi vous avez des pulsions souterraines chez les intellectuels ; ça vient

de l'université, ça vient de l'évolution de la société et, à un moment, ça émerge sous forme de livre[190]. (Peroni 98)

More than a public arena for discussion, literary talk shows have acted like echo chambers, relaying and intensifying the media coverage and publicization of the latest phenomena of the literary sphere. "Véritable documentaire sur l'actualité intellectuelle" for Peroni ("a genuine document on current intellectual news" 99), this type of TV show provides a particularly effective barometer, revealing the topicality of some issues and the popularity of some authors at a particular moment. It also exposes the social value of books which, beyond their singularity, emerge in a thematic network reflecting the preoccupations and developments of the culture in which they are produced. As they bring forward this aspect of literature while encouraging discussion and exchanges of ideas on the subject, literary talk shows are a privileged space for what Bourdieu called "la socialisation du livre" ("the socialization of books" Peroni 100), that is, the process by which books (and their content) get inscribed, circulated and transmitted in culture. One concern – formulated as soon as the "Paléo-Télévision" era – has nevertheless been whether television could really influence how people read and interpret books or even be a substitution for reading.

Unarguably, reading a book and watching television are two very different experiences. In *Television as a Cultural Force*, Richard Adler thus insists on the quotidian aspect of television:

[190] "I was aware of the trends in the publishing industry, which meant that at some point, people would tackle the same theme. It is not the publishers' will: again, intellectuals have underlying drives; it comes from university, it comes from the evolution of society, and at one point, it emerges as a book."

> A peculiarly intimate medium, [it] is part of the domestic scene, its use interwoven into the texture of daily life. One's relationship to TV is more like one's relationship to the newspaper – or to a neighbor – than to film or play, which are experienced outside of the daily routine. We turn the set on casually; we rarely attend to it with full concentration. (6)

While Peroni stresses too that, unlike reading, watching TV is not associated with the idea of effort (28), he also opposes the two activities more systematically: "A bien des égards, en effet, on peut considérer la télévision comme étant le contraire du livre: elle impose des horaires, une audience collective ; tandis qu'il invite à une aventure individuelle[191]" (19). Another essential distinction is regularly superimposed on this opposition between the two modes of consumption required by the two media. This opposition is, this time, not so much related to cultural practices as to cultural prejudices and contrasts "culture livresque" with "inculture télévisée" ("bookish culture" vs. "televised lack of culture" Peroni 22). Very early indeed, television, despite an initial ambition in some of its founders to use it as a vehicle for the dissemination of established culture, was categorized as popular culture whereas reading was unfailingly associated with high culture and even elevated as a cultural norm *a priori* (Peroni 23). The cultural value with which reading was credited was such that the increasingly ubiquitous presence TV had in people's everyday lives together with the submission of literature to the imperatives of televisual broadcasting in talk shows roused concerns about what was to become of literature.

As analyzed by Peroni, the first decades of television history were marked by debates concerning the effects of television watching on reading habits and the necessary

[191] "In fact, in many ways, television can be seen as the opposite of a book: it imposes a timetable and a collective audience, whereas a book encourages you to participate in an individual adventure."

existence of a competition between the two activities (16). Even though surveys from the 1950s reveal that the proliferation of TV sets in French households was at first slightly detrimental to the preservation of reading habits (23), the impact of literary talk shows like *Lectures pour tous* or *Apostrophes* on the promotion of books and the commercial expansion of the publishing trade eventually made the claim of competition irrelevant according to Peroni. For him, television does not challenge the cultural prerogatives of literature but rather "[aide] à combattre l'idée que les livres sont faits par des intellectuels pour des intellectuels[192]" (24). The evolution of television as well as mentalities entailed a shift "d'une problématique de la concurrence à une problématique de la complémentarité des pratiques" (8) that modified the way the relations between literature and television came to be examined: by the end of the "Paléo-Télévision" period, "ce qui importe n'est plus de savoir si les gens regardent ou pas la télévision, mais ce qu'ils y regardent [car la télévision] n'est plus tenue étrangère à la culture[193]" (20). When Romain Gary appeared on the set of *Italiques* in November 1973, it was already widely accepted that television's involvement in literary business was legitimate and that literary talk shows had a determining role to play in the marketing of books as well as in the promotion of their authors. The attitude of writers toward television and their performances on program sets contributed therefore to the construction of their personal auctorial posture as they constituted for them a specific mode of presenting themselves to

192 "[Helps] fight the idea that books are made by intellectuals for intellectuals."
193 "What matters is not to know whether people watch television or not, but what programs they watch, because television is no longer seen as removed from culture."

the world. For those who were most familiar with the media and comfortable with them, appearing on television could even be part of a deliberate strategy – as it was for Gary.

With the September 1974 *Italiques* and his following participations in other TV programs, the writer, who already had in mind the design to secretly start over under a new name, began a peculiar media campaign through which he promoted a certain image of himself so as to increase the chances of his project. On the *Italiques* set, Gary conveys an image of himself as a weary writer struggling to find new ways of renewing his literary creation and regain attention. His current production, the pseudonymous *Les Têtes de Stéphanie* and the autobiographical *La Nuit sera calme*, testify to a personal concern with how to reconcile past and present and to ensure that his career is not totally behind himself. Due to the theme of the program (the Watergate scandal), he also appears as a public figure who is invited on TV sets as much for his latest publications as for his knowledge of American politics due to his past experience in the country. Interestingly, the listing of Gary's appearances on TV in the INA archives shows that a majority of his appearances at the very end of his career were in relation with his past, with programs dealing with the elections in America, with former President and resistant Charles De Gaulle or with the death of his ex-wife Jean Seberg. The rest includes a literary talk show (*Apostrophes*) and a daily magazine show meant for housewives (*Aujourd'hui Madame*) whose themes are masculine sexuality and, in particular, declining virility in mature men, that is, a theme explicitly tackled by Gary in his 1975 book *Au-delà de cette limite votre ticket n'est plus valable*.

Céline Ther perceptively analyzed that the writer Romain Gary was, following the publication of this book, clearly assimilated to his hero, Jacques Rainier, an ageing powerful businessman who shares with Gary a past in the French Resistance, a strong passion for women, a significant nostalgia for his youth but also a loss of energy, including in sexuality (181). In a very ironic twist typical of Gary's humor, Rainier vainly tries to ward off an inevitable decline by forming a fantasy focusing on the character of a strong young man, a sort of ideal proxy that Rainier means to use as a source of regeneration for his libido: evidently, this fictional configuration prefigures Gary's real-life projection into the younger and more hype auctorial figure embodied by Ajar/Pawlovitch – all the more so as Gary was in the very same period writing texts published under the name of Ajar. The imposture set up by Gary was thus anchored in both literature and the media, making television one site of the deception among others. The writer's appearances in the above-mentioned programs participated in the creation of yet another Garyan persona who was meant to discredit the confirmed, elderly, outmoded author Romain Gary in favor of the young, budding, avant-garde writer Emile Ajar. As Schoolcraft notices, Gary, after the publication of *Au-delà de cette limite votre ticket n'est plus valable*, "made some uncomfortable promotional appearances" that relayed "a portrait of how critics liked to see him" (107 & 110). Since critics had been unresponsive to his literary creation, Gary set out to beat them at their own game by giving them what they expected on the one hand and by surprising them on the other.

To do so, Gary used television to warp his position in the media field: he exaggerated a posture of declining author and man, craving for recognition and

rejuvenation, which would stand in total contrast with Ajar's success and lack of interest in media attention (and notably his conspicuous absence on TV until the revealing *Apostrophes* in 1981). He could then triumphantly claim in *Vie et mort d'Emile Ajar*: "Comme je publiais simultanément d'autres romans sous le nom de Romain Gary, le dédoublement était parfait. Je faisais mentir le titre de mon *Au-delà de cette limite votre ticket n'est plus valable*. Je triomphais de ma vieille horreur des limites et du « une fois pour toutes »[194]" (*Légendes* 1411). Even when it was discovered that Pawlovitch was a member of Gary's family, the latter did not give up his strategy but rather complemented it with the invention of an additional image of Romain Gary allegedly created by Ajar in *Pseudo*, a grim picture of an awful uncle nicknamed "Tonton Macoute". Jean-Marie Catonné aptly sums up Gary's deprecating strategy in these terms:

> En écrivant *Pseudo*, ce n'est plus l'écrivain qu'il élimine, il s'en prend à l'homme, à sa propre personne, à son intégrité morale, s'humiliant, s'agressant sous les traits de l'odieux Tonton Macoute. *Pseudo*, cette pseudo-confession du supposé Ajar, est destiné à crédibiliser Paul Pawlovitch en tant qu'Emile Ajar, et donc à priver Gary de son dû. Il faut absolument démontrer que Romain Gary n'est pas Emile Ajar, qu'il ne peut être l'auteur de *Pseudo* et de *La Vie devant soi*. Gary s'en prend alors à sa propre légende, se dépeignant sous les traits d'un type positivement dégueulasse ... Tonton Macoute (alias Romain Gary) est une ordure … Qui croira après cela que l'auteur de ce récit-confession puisse être Gary lui-même, engagé dans un processus d'autodestruction ? De fait, après *Pseudo*, nul ne songera à imputer à Romain Gary *L'Angoisse du roi Salomon*[195]. (*L'Herne* 122)

---

[194] "As I was publishing other novels under the name of Romain Gary simultaneously, my personality was completely split. I was proving the title of my book *Au-delà de cette limite votre ticket n'est plus valide* wrong. I was defeating my old disgust for limits and for the 'once and for all.'"

[195] "When he wrote *Pseudo*, he was not getting rid of the writer, he was lashing out at the man, his own character, his moral integrity, by humiliating himself, attacking himself under the guise of the obnoxious Tonton Macoute. *Pseudo,* the pseudo-confession of the alleged Ajar, is meant to give credibility to Paul Pawlovitch as Emile Ajar, and therefore to deprive Gary of what he is due. The fact that Romain Gary is not Emile Ajar, that he cannot be the author of *Pseudo* and *La Vie devant soi* must be demonstrated at all costs. Gary then debunks his own legend, by portraying himself as an utterly disgusting guy… Tonton Macoute (aka Romain Gary) is a swine… After that, who could ever think that the author of this confession

Romain Gary's prolongation of his literary masquerade on TV sets suggests a remarkable perceptiveness of the workings of both literary world and the modern mediasphere. It constitutes "a culmination in an investigation of public images" (Schoolcraft 16) that illustrates, according to Peroni, a double tendency in the literary talk show genre that "détache l'émission littéraire de sa référence textuelle, et exhausse la personne de l'auteur devenu personnage de fiction emblématique de sa propre œuvre ... Au terme du processus de « fictionnalisation » de l'auteur qui s'engage alors, l'auteur sur le plateau se confond avec les personnages de ses livres[196]" (151). If Gary manipulated the media as he did, it is also because he was able to exploit a characteristic of the literary talk show as a program which is its specific treatment of authors.

"La télévision a inventé son langage, il est réducteur et stimulant[197]"

Several critics (Peroni, Nel, Tudoret, De Closets) agree that the invention of the literary talk show genre had a significant impact on authors and, what is more, an impact that has not always been overtly positive. From the 1950s onwards, the propagation of mass media and mass culture, the democratized access to image, and the emergence of the society of the spectacle resulted in the "spectacularisation de la littérature" (De Closets 108) which implied greater media exposure ("médiatisation grandissante") of

---

is Gary himself, engaged in a self-destructive process? Actually, after *Pseudo,* no one will think of attributing *L'Angoisse du roi Salomon* to Gary."

[196] "Separates the literary program from its textual reference, and celebrates the personality of the author, who then becomes a fictional character emblematic of his own works. At the end of the process of the author's "fictionalization", the writer on the set gets mixed up with the characters in his books."

[197] "Television has invented its own language: it is reductive and stimulating" (Peroni 93).

literary public figures. In a nascent literary star system in which the circulation of names and images determined the essential phenomena of familiarization and popularization, the author in particular became an object of curiosity. Television, through the existence of literary shows, was to maintain and satisfy this curiosity, ensuring at the same time greater intimacy with the public, commercial promotion of the author's writings and the legitimation of television as a worthy participant in culture that was often beneficial to its success. Now, as underscored by Newcomb and Hirsch, television's achievements do not only depend on cultural strategies but also on economic and industrial strategies (46), hence the necessity for the people in charge of the production and programming to opt for the right program presenter, the right broadcast time in televisual flow, and the right formal features.

For Peroni, the biggest challenge is in the hands of producers as they have to make literature a watchable television content and their solution is to rely on authors: "la solution incontournable au dilemme du producteur d'émissions littéraires [qui est de faire du spectacle avec des choses inertes]: passer par les auteurs pour donner une dimension spectaculaire[198]" (93). He emphasizes the difficulty of the task as it intrinsically goes against the traditional image of productive withdrawal associated with writers as well as the consequential wonder that its achievement roused in the original phase of "Paléo-Télévision": "Paradoxale, la présence télévisuelle de l'écrivain l'est d'emblée, dès ses premières apparitions, aux origines même du média. Alors, le visage des écrivains n'étant

[198] "The indispensable solution to the dilemma of the producer of literary shows [which is to create a form of entertainment with inert things]: using the authors to offer a spectacular dimension."

pas connu, leur voix à peine entendue, leur seule présence à la télévision pouvait constituer un événement sur le mode de la révélation[199]" (51). Television was thus to reveal writers by bringing them out of the shadows into the limelight onto people's TV screens and into their homes. As for writers, they had to adapt to this unprecedented situation that implied visibility – and audibility – on a wide scale. They suddenly had to position themselves publicly relative to preexisting mental constructions of the figure of the writer, to expose themselves and their intimate life, whether personal or creative, and to introduce themselves in a favorable light so as to not jeopardize their careers. In a nutshell, the attention paid by television to writers pressured them to become telegenic. Writers were almost forced into a new mode of existence by which they were asked to further externalize their selves outside their writings and in the most possible charismatic way – the biggest stake for them being then the congruence between the image conveyed by the writer on TV with, one the hand, the cultural stereotype of the writer figure and, on the other hand, the image conveyed in his or her writings. The sets of literary talk shows were to become the main site for the handling of this delicate issue which came to be further complicated by the impact that the program genre progressively had on the status of writers as media figures.

It is indeed Michel Peroni and Noël Nel's argument that television's literary talk shows produced a paradoxical double phenomenon of recognition and desecration ("désacralisation"). Echoing Bernard Pivot's own judgment that "tout compte fait, une

[199] "The presence of the author on television is paradoxical right from the start, ever since his first appearances, at the origins of the medium. The writers' faces were unfamiliar then, their voices were barely heard, and their presence on television could be seen as an event in the form of a revelation."

émission comme *Apostrophes*, si elle désacralise les hommes et les femmes qui y paraissent, aux yeux du public, elle les sacre écrivains[200]" (Peroni 121), the idea that the media exposure of writers on TV undermines the notion of auctority by banalizing the status of writer is evidence of an auctorial identity crisis that sees the simultaneous but contradictory existence of "d'une part une absence de statut d'écrivain, d'autre part, un « devenir-écrivain » généralisé[201]" (Peroni 120). One facet of the phenomenon is therefore that literary talk shows treat all their writing guests indiscriminately, placing them on the same footing whether they are beginners or confirmed writers, authors of fiction or non-fiction – a principle spatially reflected, for instance, in the organization of the set of *Italiques* where writers were all present simultaneously and seated side by side (fig. 43). Peroni even goes further in his criticism and reproaches such programs with allowing the promotion of mere "graphomanes" and "auteurs de circonstance" ("writing maniacs" and "occasional writers" 120) over genuine authors. What he denounces is television's complicity in the purely commercial proliferation of publications and the abusive opening of the literary scene to people who are certainly able to write page after page but have no outstanding literary talent.

In his analysis of TV genres, Mittel defines genre "as an ongoing multifaceted practice rather than a textual component" (xii). The formal differences of the programs examined in this chapter illustrate the principle of controlled evolution perceptible in the history of French literary talk shows. Surely, "it is in the economic interests of producers

[200] "All things considered, a program like *Apostrophes* may desacralize the men and women who appear on screen, but in the eyes of the viewers, it establishes them as writers."
[201] "On the one hand, the absence of an auctorial status, and on the other hand the generalized vision of what it means to 'become a writer.'"

to build on audience familiarity with generic patterns and instill novelty into those generically based presentations" (Newcomb 50); but, in the case of literary talk shows, the change in the generic pattern formed by the repartition of guests on the set and their succession during the show's progress, which is originally a characteristic of the genre in itself, has been evidence of the undermining of the author's status. For Nel, "[de] *Lectures pour tous* [à] *Apostrophes*, ... cette évolution des plateaux vers un ensemble composite d'invités, où la diversité des champs d'appartenance [va avec] la disparité des notoriétés[202]" (Beylot & Benassi 174) has brought to light the advent of mass culture and the banalization of the act of writing when promoted on television. If the structure of *Lectures pour tous* and *Actualité littéraire*, two programs broadcasted in the early stages of "Paléo-Télévision," were based on the succession of separate interviews by the host of individual writers who never met, *Italiques* and *Apostrophes*, which were closer to "Néo-Télévision", no longer applied this principle, favoring a formula in which writers could interact with one another during debates supervised by the host(s). Thus, what Nel calls "l'attribution d'indices de qualité permettant de distinguer les écrivains" ("the attribution of indicators of quality to distinguish writers" Beylot & Benassi 174), one of the traditional prerogatives of legitimizing institutions like the university or literary criticism, was soon not a priority of the literary talk show genre. Rather, what counted more and more was the spectacularization of literature that would ensure the success of the programs and their ratings. And, as stated by Peroni earlier, this effect could only be

[202] "From *Lectures pour tous* to *Apostrophes*, … the evolution of sets towards a composite ensemble of guests whose origins, affiliations and fame are very diverse."

produced by relying on the telegeny of authors and their capacity to stimulate the public's interest in their work. This approach to literature instituted a new relation between books, authors and audience. Within the framework of the literary talk show, "la télévision substitue à la relation écriture-lecture, la relation corps et parole d'écrivain-écoute de téléspectateur[203]" (Beylot & Benassi 174), relegating writers to the role of performer and books to negligible matter.

Although a prominent actor in the media exposure of authors, Bernard Pivot had no illusion concerning the effect of television: "la télévision ... désacralise l'écrivain. Elle le fait descendre de son Olympe, de sa tour d'ivoire ... L''écrivain perd en mystère, en étrangeté, en attitude[204]" (Beylot et Benassi 175). If writers are invited on TV sets to express themselves about literature and their work, what is expected from them is a particular kind of performance. The interview of books being an impossible ideal to achieve, writers are supposed to come, in lieu of their book, to say what the book is (Peroni 48). They have become, above all else, spokespersons for their writings. They are implicitly regarded as being not only responsible for their book on the public scene but also as being legitimate interpreters who can translate some written literary content into watchable and audible televisual content[205]. One major drawback in this process is redundancy as, in presenting their books, writers are asked to repeat what they expressed

[203] "TV replaces the relation between writing and reading with the relation between the writer's body and speech and the viewer's attention."
[204] "TV … desacralizes the writer. It makes him leave his Olympus, his ivory tower … The writer loses his mystery, his strangeness, his attitude."
[205] Romain Gary commenting on Màrquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in *Italiques* in 1973 may also show that writers are expected to be able to speak for books written by others, as though, like critics, they necessarily had professional skills in analyzing texts and giving reviews in media.

in their writing, or "ce qui est pire, d'énoncer sous une forme claire ce qu'il a écrit sous une forme ramassée" ("what is worse, to say clearly what he/she wrote in an elaborate way" Peroni 47). Whereas writers' ability to handle verbal expression has always been seen as the core of their talent, it is, in this context, reduced to a form of psittacism that further weakens their auctority – all the more so as the representative function imparted on writers relies on the deceptive notion that writers and their books are one and the same entity as it was brutally experienced by Gary.

Writers are indeed assimilated to their writings in such a way that it is suggested that there is a necessary correspondence between written expression and personal body language; or, to put it more bluntly, between the content of the book and the person visible on the screen. In a stimulating analysis, Peroni argues that this blurring between authors and their productions is a result of another deceptive assimilation that has increasingly identified the fictional space of the book with the televisual set of talk shows:

> L'identité auteur-acteur est la simple implication de cette autre identité entre la scène du plateau et l'espace du livre. La métaphore théâtrale présuppose que l'oeuvre ressemble à l'auteur, qu'il y a adéquation entre manière d'être, de parler, de se tenir et manière d'écriture ... C'est le livre qui est invité mais c'est l'auteur qui doit faire le spectacle[206]! (150)

The weakening of the status of writers to a mere function of representation has furthermore been accentuated by the evolution of the literary talk show genre and its filming techniques. A quick comparison of two noteworthy techniques used respectively

[206] "The author-actor identity is the mere involvement of this auctorial identity between the set (or stage) and the fictional space of the book. The theatrical metaphor presupposes that the works are a reflection of their author, that the way the writer is, speaks, behaves matches the way he writes … The real guest is the book, but the author is the one who must do the show."

in *Lectures pour tous* and *Apostrophe* can bring to light the gradual shift in the televisual treatment of authors.

First literary talk show on French TV, *Lectures pour tous* is considered as having laid the basis of the genre, and notably the canonical recipe for interviewing writers. One element of its visual signature has been identified in the use of the camera to film authors in the process of being interviewed. In this show, the camera tends to linger on the writer: close-ups are frequent and shots are often static, prone to scrutinize the writer as he or she tries to answer Dmayet's or Desgraupes's questions. Reflecting a remarkable taste for introspection (De Closets 30), the filmic techniques favored by director Jean Prat seek to match the demanding style adopted by the two hosts in their interviews. Their ambition being not only to confront writers with their texts but also to reveal them as individuals, with distinctive personalities and approaches to writing, the camera focuses intensely on writers as De Closets remarks: "l'invité est traqué, ses moindres faits et gestes guettés comme autant d'indices sur sa personnalité[207]" (40). According to her, the aim was to construct the image of the invited writer in a revelatory mode (30). Jean d'Arcy, who was then French TV's program director, shares this view and attributes the show's success to its skillfulness in revealing individuals:

> Ce qui fascine le public, ce n'est pas ce que lui dit un tel ou un tel, mais la connaissance que l'on acquiert de la personne qui vous parle ... Sous le scalpel de la télévision, on voyait se révéler de façon extraordinaire la personnalité des auteurs

[207] "The guest is scrutinized; all his comings and goings are monitored and treated as so many clues revealing his personality."

> interviewés ... On avait fait profondément connaissance avec leur personnalité, leur cœur, leur âme, leur cerveau[208]. (De Closets 30)

Romain Gary's participation in the program in 1956 characteristically includes images meant to implement this strategy by shooting him closely as he talks or listens to Dumayet (fig.41). As these shots illustrate, Prat's expertise lies in the visual attention paid to writers' faces, hands and even bodies, which was "une nouveauté qui [fascinait] les téléspectateurs" ("a novelty that fascinated TV viewers", De Closets 30) and which materialized the two hosts' opinion that it was more interesting to watch somebody think and seek for answers than talk extensively (Peroni 61).

fig.41. Filming Gary in *Lectures pour tous*

It follows that, surprisingly enough, silence was not a problem on *Lectures pour tous*. Unlike Dumayet and Desgraupes's experience on the radio with *Domaine français*, their interview method on TV did not have to worry about lengthy gaps in the conversation. On the contrary, filming a writer's silence enhanced the impression of introspection and intimacy. Such a filmic treatment of writers during the interview phase

[208] "What fascinates the viewers is not what such or such guest tells them, but the knowledge they acquire on the person addressing them … Under the scalpel of television, the personality of the interviewed authors was revealed in an extraordinary way … The viewers had gotten to know their personality, their heart, their soul, their brain in depth."

contrasts with the show's *mise-en-scène* of their books. As described at the beginning of this chapter, books are not present in this phase but rather relegated to the structural margin of the program as they are always shown separately in a space distinct from the space of the set, before and after the interview. Even though writers are required in *Lectures pour tous* to speak in the name of their books, they are first and foremost expected to reveal who they are. The show's organization clearly distinguishes them from their productions on the visual level and allows them to remain authors in the first place, even though it tends to spotlight the individual more than the work.

A quarter of a century later, *Apostrophes* brought the spectacularization of literature and the media exposure of individuals even further to the point that Pivot was often reproached with favoring spectacular performances ("faire du spectacle") over profound intellectual debates (Peroni 93). Despite this criticism, his show was undeniably a public *and* critical hit and successful outcome of the experimentations made by its predecessors from the 1950s on: if *Lectures pour tous*, or even *Actualité Littéraire*, represent the formative years of the literary talk show genre, *Apostrophes* is the culmination of the genre's popularity and the benchmark of excellence against which all subsequent shows were to be appraised. When Paul Pawlovitch was invited on the set in 1981, both the genre and the program had found their bearings for some time and the film techniques and *mise-en-scène* had long been tested and well-established. Due to Gary's death and the public disclosure of the Ajar affair, this particular show was certainly special; however, except for the absence of an audience on the set, it displayed the same dispositives and visual gimmicks as other shows. One visual effect especially is

noteworthy when it comes to the representation of writers on the screen. The July 3, 1981 show was one of the infrequent *Apostrophes* shows to be devoted to a specific personality (Gary) rather than to a theme. This particularity did not preclude the show's organization from being the same and therefore from consisting in a discussion between several guests (Pawlovitch, Bondy, Mendel, Kessel) under the aegis of a host (Pivot). Among these guests, Pawlovitch was the only one to come to present a book and, consequently, to be given the following characteristic visual treatment.

At the beginning of the show, as Pivot introduces Pawlovitch and his text, the book is shown on the screen. It is a conventional static close-up on its front cover (fig.49), unveiling the author's name, the title of the book, the publisher's name and an astutely placed marketing paper slip bearing "Ajar" in big capital letters so as to both inform potential buyers what the book is about and to insist on the sensational nature of this text that is to explicit details about a current literary scoop. So far, the inclusion of such a shot at the beginning of the show is not so different from what could already be seen in *Lectures pour tous*. The difference comes a few seconds later with the insertion, in the image and right in the middle of the book cover, of an insert that gradually becomes clearer and reveals Pawlovitch's eyes. A zooming out effect then transforms the extreme close-up into a head shot showing the man as he talks to Pivot (fig.41). Unquestionably this technique is more complex than the techniques used in *Lectures pour tous* but also richer in symbolic meaning.

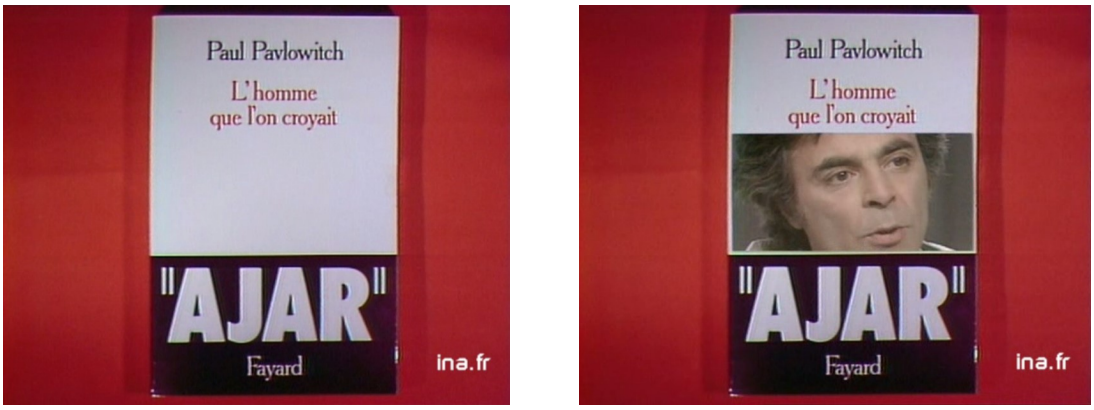

fig.41. Identifying author and text: Pawlovitch's book in *Apostrophes*

On a basic level, the addition of the image allows a total identification of the author by literally attributing a face to the name mentioned on the cover[209]. On a deeper level, it modifies the perception of the writer-book tandem. More precisely, "le dispositif de l'émission qui résultait jusque-là d'un impératif pragmatique (assurer le spectacle en dépit de l'inertie du livre), opère symboliquement une transformation substantielle du livre[210]" (Peroni 97). The appearance of the writer on the cover of his book endows him with a sort of allegorical function. More than ever he is the representative of his creation that he suddenly animates with life, depriving it of its problematic inertia. Visually speaking, the writer takes the place of the content of his own book, and this substitution suggests that the text no longer has importance, since the ideas being expressed by the writer in the inserted image are silencing the voice of the text. The visual gimmick adopted by *Apostrophes* materializes in a most striking fashion the total assimilation

[209] In this specific case, the process is also complicated by the presence of the paper slip. The man who appears is identified as having a double identity and being both Paul Pawlovitch and Ajar, which creates ambiguity and suspicion (or curiosity).

[210] "The organization of the program, which until then relied on a down-to-earth imperative – entertaining the audience in spite of the inertia of a book – symbolically leads to a substantial transformation of the book."

between writers and their books that has been growingly encouraged by television's treatment of literature. It exacerbates the spectacularization of literature and authors, placing writers in the position of performers representing a product they have created whose lack of telegeny forces them to occupy the forefront of the televisual stage and excel in the performance that is expected from this category of intellectual figures identified by the label "writer" in the cultural sphere. To finish on this point, let us quote one more time Michel Peroni who underlines the paradox that came to be, in the end, at the core of writers' performances in literary talk shows: "Quand c'est l'existence proprement textuelle de son livre qui justifiait la présence de l'auteur sur le plateau, c'est la prestation en direct de l'auteur qui donne finalement au livre son contenu![211]" (97).

The invention of television induced writers to adapt one more time to the developments of the mediapshere, including to new technological imperatives. The complicity that could exist between Baudelaire and his photographic portraitists Carjat and Nadar during their tête-à-tête sessions was now a long way behind. It was already blunted in the time when authors like Colette were courted by the cinematograph to be portrayed in a fictional or non-fictional mode. The increasing sophistication of the media invented in the 20th century that required a multiplication of operators dealing with the technical aspects and of professionals in charge of the marketing, circulation or advertising of the final visual product profoundly modified the way authors were represented with visual means. The multiple constraints imposed by the technical

[211] "While the concrete textual existence of his book is what justified the author's presence on the set, it is the author's live performance which eventually gives the book its contents."

specificities of each medium and the various uses made of the cinema and television in society generated new power relations between authors, their works and the person, or far more frequently, the person*s* whose role is to make sure that the medium is exploited in the best and most profitable way. The lack of telegeny of the act of reading and of the static disembodied written text prompted TV professionals to require greater presence and greater implication from writers at the cost of a reinterpretation of their very status as writers. More than ever before, writers were asked to be the voice of their texts; nevertheless, the necessity for television to attract viewers also required from them to be efficient performers, eloquent, charismatic and willing to share with the public. Whereas texts tend to be conspicuously discrete if not absent from literary talk shows and books to be reduced to elements of decor (or to a legitimating presence in the hands of hosts proving that they have actually read the text), authors are omnipresent. Even when they keep mostly quiet, the camera keeps an eye on them. The combination of the camera eye (visibility) and the host's interview (audibility) are the two driving forces of the literary talk show genre and as such the main sources of pressure for writers, who, under their scrutiny, are incited to position themselves in identifiable postures.

One problem inherent to the evolution of the genre and television in general that is often put forward is the over-importance taken by TV hosts in literary talk shows. The immense popularity of somebody like Bernard Pivot suggested that hosts were now more important than writers, because, unlike their guests, they mastered the art of being on television and because they gave shows their distinctive signature style – not to mention the fat that they also had great power when it came to influence sales number or make

writers' careers. Such a view testifies, one the hand, to the growing competition existing between the literary field and the media field and, on the other hand, to the crucial importance taken by media like television in literature's interaction with the rest of the world and in the expansion of literary works' paratext. The TV host can then be seen as one agent among others participating in the revelation of writers and texts onto the public. If TV hosts like Dumayet or Pivot had the professional duty to be the guarantors of literature's visibility on TV screens, they also catalyzed the revelation of author's personalities and auctorial postures by using the old art of maieutics with their guests and lead writers to publicly express their identity.

Romain Gary's case, nevertheless, proves that, with the passing of time and the growing familiarization of writers with media strategies and demands, authors could also play with the constraints and rules of the medium to their advantage. If the television literary talk show genre brought literature closer to the domains of spectacle and entertainment, media-savvy authors can also introduce deception, elusiveness, ambivalence, hybridity and even fictionalization in televisual representation with the possible aim of re-appropriating a process of auctorial self definition that has been taken out their hands (Schoolcraft 12). A man who made himself a legend (Blanch 5), Gary demonstrated the destabilizing power of the equivocation of mobile identities that merge fiction with reality in disregard of any contradiction and any danger of losing one's self. The extreme outcome of his ultimate literary enterprise, which confirms Meizoz's warning that writers always run the risk of seeing their person being eventually contaminated by their auctorial posture (*Fabrique* 41), is a potent reminder that auctorial

postures, like any other social identities, are a construction elaborated through interactions with the exterior world. Inasmuch as the photographic, cinematic and televisual representations of authors have always been as much in the hands of writers themselves as in the hands of others, whether it is the public who is their recipients or the professionals who are in charge of producing them, they truly are a collective production bringing together different actors of culture and channeling their communication. Considered from this perspective, it appears then that photography, cinema and television have never so well deserved their designation as “media” ...

As a conclusion: And then what? Frédéric Beigbeder, convergence culture and “la surenchère médiatique” (“media insatiability”)

If I was asked to select one visual document to conclude this study on French writers and the development of visual media and visual culture since the middle of the 19th century, I would choose the following (fig.42):

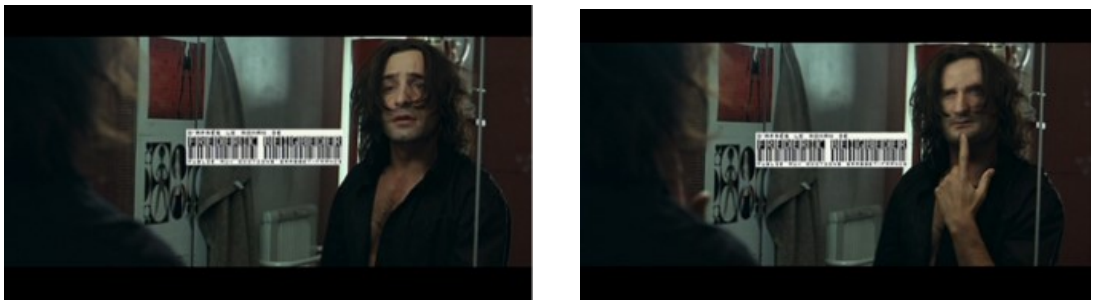

fig.42. A character morphing into an author

There is an extract of the opening sequence of *99F* directed by Jan Kounen in 2007. The movie is an adaptation of Frédéric Beigbeder’s eponymous novel published seven years earlier. Thanks to an elaborate visual effect, Kounen, in this scene, shows the drugged hero, Octave (played by actor Jean Dujardin), morphing into his creator, Beigbeder. In our postmodern age of not only mechanical but digital and electronic reproduction, this cinematic image is emblematic of the complex evolution of the relations between writers and visual media since the invention of photography almost two centuries ago. The writer’s image, which was originally only present in the text as a projection of readers’ fantasies and speculations, has become a concrete picture that has, so to speak, a life of its own in the paratextual space of his/her *oeuvre* and in the mediasphere. This image, which, as evidenced by Baudelaire’s, Colette’s and Gary’s personal iconographies, is

actually rarely unidimensional and identical, has become as important as the content of writers' writings.

So, this image, or rather these images, I would argue, have truly become part of their *oeuvre*: these images, whether photographic, cinematic, televisual, or other, participate in the creation of their universe as well as in the construction of the persona that they are to leave for posterity, although they are technically produced by another person and in a medium that is not writers' usual means of expression. These images do not have the fickleness and inconsistency of the textual spectral auctorial image built by the subjective interpretation of texts by readers: on the contrary, their visual actuality and the possibility to produce and replicate them mechanically make invaluable historical and cultural documents. With the successive inventions of photography, cinema and television, which all guarantee the accuracy of the image and its practicality, as images can now be reproduced, exchanged, and stored, writers' images entered not only visual culture and its adjoining phenomenon, celebrity culture, but also History. Consequently, I would contend that it is possible to regard these images as "*lieux de mémoire*" ("sites of memory") in the sense, defined by Pierre Nora, of a "significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of [a] community" (Holtorf).

As a *locus memoriae*, an image of a writer is indeed loaded with visual information pertaining to perception and status, hence the highly symbolic potentiality of writers' portraits. When the production of images by photography, cinema, and television is in the hands of a distinct operator (who is not necessarily one particular individual but

can be a team of technicians for example), they indeed incorporate a double form of mediation, the technical mediation inherent to the medium used and the subjective mediation of the operator, which often relies on a certain number of choices pertaining to the very conditions in which the picture is made (position of the machine, light, framing, etc.). Precisely because these images do not belong to the realm of autobiography but to the realm of biography, they inform the viewer about the position of a particular writer in the literary field of his/her time. A writer's image is therefore a form of social, professional and cultural location. Thus, the celebrity of the writer Colette in the 1950s prompted the existence of photographs (in advertising for instance) which have nothing in common with Baudelaire's intimate photographic portraits by Carjat. In the same way, Colette's appearance in Bellon's eulogizing and memorializing documentary at the age of 77 is hardly comparable to young Romain Gary's first appearance on television in the *Lectures pour tous* talk show, although the two documents are almost contemporaneous.

The various forms of images considered in this study have clearly revealed the diversity of images that the inventions of photography, cinema and television brought to visual culture in hardly more than a century. As I have attempted to demonstrate, the proliferation of images has strongly impacted the way writers could and still can display their auctority, that is, their status and authority as creators of literary texts. Since Baudelaire's era there has been a significant shift from textual strategies to visual strategies, which nowadays implies media strategies. I do not mean that textual strategies have disappeared (far from it) but rather that visual media strategies have grown in addition to them. The very fact of agreeing to "play the game" and to play it more or less

actively is already a way for writers to position themselves in the literary field and to adopt a more or less singularizing auctorial posture. The writers who, like Salinger or Maurice Blanchot, refused to participate in the spectacularization of their selves, fashioned for themselves auctorial identities that were necessarily very different from what those of Colette and Gary who both accepted, and they did not welcome, media attention. Of course, the development of celebrity culture modified the rules of the game and exacerbated the phenomenon of *mise en images* ("transposition into images") of the writer and of literature in general, encouraging writers to actively engage in the creation and promotion of their visual auctorial selves. One effect, and probably an unexpected effect, has been, it seems, a contamination of literary creation, at least in French literature. The growing sophistication of portraiture due to the diversification in the media and technologies allowing the production of images, has prompted a greater porosity between the arts and between media, which, in turn, has prompted greater artistic and professional mobility in some writers, such as Frédéric Beigbeder – a greater mobility that has come to affect both the practice of literary writing and their representation in media.

So, coming back to Frédéric Beigbeder, as not simply a representative but a culmination of the current trends affecting the relations between writers and visual media, I would like to briefly look again at the shot extracted from *99F* (fig.42). On the surface, what we see as spectators is a cinematographic *clin d'oeil*, a visual allusion to the novelist who invented the character who has just been introduced. On a deeper level, this is a form of cross-over by which literature and cinema interact, as the superimposition of

Beigbeder's image brings together the intradiegetic and the extradiegetic, the fictional and the real. What we see then is the literal transformation of a writer into his own character or the penetration of an author into his own fiction. This scene marks the intrusion of autofiction in an otherwise very classically fictional movie. Exploiting resources that literature does not have, the cinema materializes the assimilation between author and character in a most striking way. Even more efficiently than when Colette makes her heroine a younger fictionalized a*lter ego* in *Divine,* Beigbeder reclaims his authorship by his own visual presence. He too reminds the spectators that he constructed the character of Octave as his own *alter ego*.

The first thing that should be noted about Beigbeder is indeed his predilection for autofiction and intertextual references, of which his text *99F* is a good example. Its character, Octave Parango, a rebellious advertising executive with a dissolute life, is indeed heavily inspired from Beigbeder's own life and career in advertising. In this respect, he is one of the frontrunners of the current French literary vogue for autofiction which has been calling into question the divide between real and fiction and experimenting with the use of a subjective, personal narrative "I" that is neither totally fictionalized, nor totally genuine. His intertwining of fictional and allegedly autobiographical elements has placed him in the same (popular) as Annie Ernaux or Christine Angot, two other fairly subversive figures of French literature, regularly attacked for their extensive use of reality and intimate events. When Beigbeder does not stage himself in his texts, he appears as himself in movies which are, by contrast, fictional, like the 2005 movie *Imposture*, which is about a literary imposture and the

Parisian literary scene, or the 2011 comedy *Beur sur la ville*, which has nothing to do with literature but in which he is supposed to embody the rich and famous, the well-off and somewhat debauched artistic Parisian bourgeoisie, in opposition to the destitute, suburban, immigrant heroes of the movie. These cinematographic participations obviously play with Beigbeder's image and with his auctorial identity as he is cast either as a representative of his professional category or as the epitome of a certain class of writers associated in French imagination with wealth, insolence and Parisianism. These are not, however, the only relations existing between the writer and the cinema. If his novel *99F* was adapted for the screen, he himself adapted two of his books, *L'Amour dure trois ans* and *L'Idéal*, in 2012 and 2016, and tried his hand at directing. Like Colette and Gary before him, Beigbeder, therefore, turned to another form of writing that would allow him to visually transpose his stories and go back to the creation of visual artefacts, as when he worked in advertising and designed photographic or televisual campaigns.

Finally, Beigbeder's résumé would not be complete if no mention was made of his various experiences with the press and television. A true professional versatile writer like Colette and Gary, the author of *99F* and *Mémoires d'un jeune homme dérangé*, has accumulated many activities in different magazines and on different TV shows. Thus, between 1997 and 2001, he made literary criticisms on channel Paris Première; between 2005 and 2007, he was a contributor for the Canal + daily show *Le Grand Journal* and then he hosted a literary and film review show, *Le Cercle*, on the specialized channel Canal + Cinéma until 2015. As for the press, after co-founding the literary magazines *NRV* and *Bordel* in 1996 and 2003, he became executive director of *Lui* in 2013 and

started to write columns for magazines like *GQ* or *Le Figaro Magazine*'s weekly supplement, *Feuilleton Magazine*. However surprising it may be, this unclassifiable author who likes mocking established institutions and right-minded people has often been involved in the awarding of literary prizes, as when he agreed to become a member of the Renaudot jury in 2011 or when he created the Prix Sade in 2001. Finally, Beigbeder worked for publisher Flammarion as an editor from 2003 until 2006. His innumerable activities ensured him extensive media coverage and immense popularity. His image, as Colette's image in her time, became a familiar view in French visual culture to the point that it took undeniable mercantile value and the writer and former advertising executive was asked to model for brands like Galeries Lafayette. Needless to add that, being a man of his time, Beigbeder has also been active on the web with the now obligatory array of social networks accounts (Twitter, Instagram), a blog and contributions on websites.

All that being said, what are we to do with such all-encompassing abundance of occupational activities and with such unrestricted media visibility? The first conclusion that comes to my mind is that the writer Frédéric Beigbeder appears to be an heir to Baudelaire, Colette and Gary in the sense that he shows the same proclivity for dabbling in different forms of writing. Baudelaire had art criticism as a string to his bow; Colette had script writing, advertising and film criticism; Gary had script writing and journalism; Beigbeder cumulates most of these as strings to his own bow. Like Colette and Gary, he has also been very much implied in the creation of visual works. One consequence is the hybridization of his auctorial posture. His multimedia professional experience constructs him as an author of both literary and visual *oeuvres* which may sometimes converge.

Beigbeder's case is one of exaggerated plurality, one that confirms the longevity of one of the directions taken by literature after the inventions of photography, cinema and television, namely, the growing integration of visual media in literary creation. Along the same lines as the less popular practices of photobiography or autobiographical documentary, the interweaving of literary and visual creation in Beigbeder's career confirms the postmodern interdependence of literature and visual media, whether for creative or promotional purposes.

The pervasiveness of pictures in our image-obsessed civilization opened new paths for writers to elect, or not. For those who do choose to make themselves visible and to exploit this visibility, a wide array of technologies and strategies are now available – most of which also enable them to play, not only with their images, but with the flexible articulation between fiction and reality. Such a choice, however, entails one consequence, which is to endorse the double responsibility of authoring both literary texts and visual texts, which in itself implies endorsing the responsibility of authoring both an intangible, evasive, spectral textual image of oneself widely opened to the interpretation and subjective interference of readers *and* a tangible, physical, visual image of oneself that exposes one's person more than one's literary talent – with the risk of seeing the individual (the writer) overshadow the creation (author). The presence of writers in visual media then complicates the construction of auctority by fragmenting the sources of visibility. Written texts are no longer the only sites where the writers' presence transpire. These are now in competition with official photographic portraits, cinematic images, TV documentaries as they also are with unofficial pictures.

The mechanical reproduction of images and the continual invention of devices enabling any individual to produce, modify and circulate pictures (non-professional cameras, the Web, Photoshop software, social networks, etc.) has indeed intensified the implication of the public in the spectacularization of writers' images. Writers and artists are no longer the only ones to be in control of the creation and circulation of images so that readers, and more generally the public, have gradually come to interfere in the *mise-en-images* of writers, as this picture coming from an article published in newspaper *Ouest France* proves (fig.43).

fig.43. Beigbeder and a fan in *Ouest France*

I started this study by mentioning Henry Jenkins's analysis of the phenomenon of textual poaching; I would like to finish with his notion of media convergence. Jenkins describes convergence as an ongoing dynamic process at the crossroads of media technologies and industries as well as audiences and contents. It is a paradigm shift of communication systems that encompasses technological, industrial, cultural and social aspects. One is that it brings together old and new media together for the sake of creation, so that

corporate platforms as well as isolated individuals become actors of the same creative flux.

Beigbeder's diverse multimedia career illustrates this interpenetration of old and new media as he is apparently as comfortable with the old medium of literature as with television or Twitter. As a writer, journalist, movie director, and television contributor, he is a professional of media convergence – contrary to the young Beigbeder's fan with the phone in the *Ouest France* picture. As she tries to make a selfie with the famous writer, which she may made public afterwards on the Web, she contributes non-professionally to the construction of the writer's iconography, and, indirectly, to the construction of his auctority as an accessible, sociable writer who has no problem meeting his readers and posing offhandedly for pictures. Whereas Jenkins stresses the importance of media industries and socio-economic factors in the development of media convergence, I would rather insist on the individual imaginary dimension of it. In his introduction to his eponymous book, *Convergence Culture*, he wrote:

> Convergence does not occur though media appliances, however sophisticated they may become. Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others. Each of us constructs our own personal mythology from bits and fragments of information extracted from the media flow and transformed into resources through which we make sense of our everyday lives. (3)

It seems to me that the modern transmedia representation of writers in visual media as varied as photography, cinema, television and new technologies appeals to the same process. Amplifying the art and techniques of portraiture, it enacts the bringing together of all media that now characterizes our culture. In three chapters, I have attempted to take

stock of how the advent of what Baudelaire once described as "a civilization of the image" impacted the construction of the auctorial image of three writers who witnessed and embraced the appearance of a new image-making technology: Baudelaire and photography, Colette and cinema, Gary and television. My angle was deliberately retrospective so as to try to stress the history of visual media technologies as well as the significance of the invention of a new medium on a writer's *whole* career and posterity. I like to think that one more chapter will have to be added in some time when some more distance can be taken to similarly consider the impact of the invention and popularization of Internet-related new technologies on the status and image of writers. Why not then a chapter on Beigbeder? Maybe "Frédéric Beigbeder and the Web: Frustrating mortality through virtuality"?

References

Print sources.

Adler, Richard. *TV as Cultural Force.* New York: Praeger, 1976.

Amsellem, Guy. *Romain Gary. Les Métamorphoses de l'identité.* Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008.

Anissimov, Myriam. *Romain Gary, le caméléon*. Paris: Denoël, 2004.

Apostolidès, Jean-Marie. *Le Roi-Machine. Spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1981.

Arasse, Daniel. *Le Détail. Pour une histoire rapprochée de la peinture*. Paris: Flammarion, 1992.

Armstrong, Nancy. *Fiction in the Age of Photography. The Legacy of British Realism*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999.

Banda, Daniel, & José Moure, eds. *Le Cinéma: Naissance d'un art, 1895-1920*. Paris: Flammarion, 2008.

---. *Le Cinéma : l'art d'une civilisation 1920-1960*. Paris: Flammarion, 2011.

Bandy, William T., & Claude Pichois. *Baudelaire devant ses contemporains*. Paris: Union générale d'édition, 1967.

Barasc, Katy, & Jean-Pierre Joecker. *Album Masques : Colette*. Paris: Masques, 1984.

Bardèche, Maurice, & Robert Brasillach. *Histoire du cinéma*. 2 vols. Paris : Éditions Denoël et Steele, 1935.

Barthes, Roland. *La Chambre claire : notes sur la photographie*. Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, 1980.

---. *Œuvres complètes*. 5 vols. Paris: Seuil, 2002.

Bassouls, Sophie. *Ecrivains : 550 écrivains*. Paris : Flammarion, 2001.

Baudelaire, Charles. *Correspondance*. Claude Pichois, Jean Ziegler, eds. 2 vols. Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1973.

---. *Œuvres complètes.* Claude Pichois, ed. 2 vols. Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1975-6.

---. *Ecrits sur l'art*. Francis Molinat, ed. Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1999.

Becker, Karin. *Le Dandysme littéraire en France au XIX^e^ siècle*. Orléans: éditions Paradigme, 2010.

Beigbeder, Frédéric. *Mémoires d'un jeune homme dérangé*. Paris: La Table Ronde, 1990.

---. *Vacances dans le coma*. Paris: Grasset et Fasquelle, 1994.

---. *L'Amour dure trois ans.* Paris: Grasset et Fasquelle, 1997.

---. *99F*. Paris: Grasset et Fasquelle, 2000.

---. *Un Roman français*. Paris: Grasset, 2009.

Bénichou, Paul. *Le Sacre de l'écrivain, 1750-1830.* Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1973.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Writer of Modern Life*. Cambridge: The Belknap P of Harvard UP, 2006.

---. *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and other Writings on Media*. Cambridge: The Belknap P of Harvard UP, 2008.

Bernas, Steven. *Archéologie et évolution de la notion d'auteur*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001.
Beylot, Pierre, & Stéphane Benassi, eds. "Littérature et télévision", *CinémAction.* Paris: Editions du Cerf – Télérama : Centre National du Cinéma, 1996.
Blanch, Lesley. *Romain, un regard particulier*. Paris: Editions du Rocher, 2009.
Blumler, Jay, ed. *Television and the Public Interest. Vulnerable Values in West European Broadcasting*. London: Sage Publications, 1992.
Bolter, J. David. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge: MIT P, 1999.
---, & Richard Grusin. *Remediation*. *Understanding New Media*. Cambridge: MIT P, 1999.
Bonal, Gérard, ed. *Colette*. Paris: Cahiers de l'Herne, Editions de l'Herne, 2011.
---. *Colette. « Je veux faire ce que je veux »*. Paris: Perrin, 2014.
Bourdieu, Pierre. *Photography : A Middle-Brow Art*. Stanford, Stanford UP, 1990.
---. *Les Règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*. Paris: Seuil, 1992.
---. *Sur la télévision*. Paris: Liber éditions, 1996.
Bourdon, Jérôme. *Histoire de la télévision sous de Gaulle*. Paris: Anthropos/INA, 1990.
---, & Agnès Chauveau, Francis Denel, Laurent Gervereau, Cécile Méadel, eds. *La Grande aventure du petit écran. La télévision française 1935-1975.* Paris: BDIC/INA, 1997.
Brasey, Edouard. *L'Effet-Pivot*. Paris: Editions Ramsay, 1987.
Braudy, Leo. *The Frenzy of Renown. Fame and its History*. New York: Vintage Books, 1997.
Brenot, Philippe. *Romain Gary, de Kacew à Ajar*. Paris: L'Esprit du Temps, 2014.
Breschand, Jean. *Le Documentaire, l'autre face du cinéma*. Paris: Cahiers du cinema/Scéren-CNDP, 2002.
Brilliant, Richard. *Portraiture*. London: Reaktion Books, 1991.
Brissette, Pascal. *La Malédiction littéraire. Du poète crotté au génie malheureux.* Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2005.
Broadcasting Research Unit. Quality in Television. Programmes, Programme-Makers, Systems. London: John Libbey, 1989.
Brunet, François. *Photography and Literature*. London: Reaktion Books, 2009.
Brunn, Alain. *L'Auteur*. Paris: GF Flammarion, 2001.
Burke, Sean. *The Death and Return of the Author. Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2008.
Burton, Richard, D.E.. *Baudelaire in 1859: A Study in the sources of Poetic Creativity.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988.
Calasso, Roberto. *La Folie Baudelaire*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012.
Calè, Luisa, & Patrizia Di Bello. *Illustrations, Optics and Objects in Nineteenth-Century Literary and Visual Cultures*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
Carou, Alain. *Le Cinéma français et les écrivains : Histoire d'une rencontre 1906-1914*.
Paris: Ecole nationale des Chartes, 2002.
Carrier, David. *High Art: Baudelaire and the Origins of Modernist Painting*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1996.

Castex, Pierre-Georges. *Baudelaire critique d'art.* Paris: Société d'édition de l'enseignement supérieur, 1969.
Catonné, Jean-Marie. *Romain Gary/Emile Ajar*. Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1990.
Chamarat, Gabrielle, & Alain Goulet. *L'Auteur*. Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, 1996.
Clark, Timothy. *The Absolute Bourgeois. Artists and Politics in France 1848-1851*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1973.
Colette. *Paris de ma fenêtre*. Geneva: Editions du milieu du monde, 1944.
---. *Romans, récits, souvenirs (1900-1919)*. Paris : Bouquins, Robert Laffont, 1989.
[includes : *Claudine à l'école, Claudine à Paris, Claudine en ménage, Claudine s'en va, La Retraite sentimentale, Les Vrilles de la vigne, L'Ingénue libertine, La Vagabonde, L'Envers du music-hall, L'Entrave, La Paix chez les bêtes, Les Heures longues, Dans la foule, Mitsou*]
---. *Romans*, *récits et souvenirs (1941-1949). Critique dramatique (1934-1938)*. Paris : Bouquins, Robert Laffont, 1989.
[includes : *Journal à rebours*, *Julie de Carneilhan*, *De ma fenêtre*, *Le Képi*, *Trois… Six…Neuf…*, *Gigi*, *Belles saisons*, *L'Etoile Vesper*, *Pour un herbier*, *Le Fanal bleu*, *Autres bêtes*, *En pays connu*, *La Jumelle noire*]
---. *Romans*. Paris : Librairie Générale française, 2004.
[includes : *La Vagabonde*, *L'Entrave*, *Mitsou ou comment l'esprit vient aux femmes*, *Le Blé en herbe*, *La Fin de Chéri*, *La Naissance du jour*, *La Seconde*, *La Chatte*, *Duo*, *Le Toutounier*, *Julie de Carneilhan*, *Gigi*]
---. *Le Second métier de l'écrivain*. Paris: Editions de l'Herne, 2014.
---. *L'Envers du music-hall*. Paris: Flammarion, n.d.
---. *La Vagabonde*. Paris: Flammarion, n.d.
Collier, Peter, & Robert Lethbridge, eds. *Artistic Relations: Literature and Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century France*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1994.
Compagnon, Antione. *Baudelaire, l'irréductible*. Paris: Flammarion, 2014.
Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer. On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: MIT P, 1990.
Custen, George F. *Bio/pics: How Hollywood constructed Public History*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1992.
Darragon, Eric. « Nadar en double », *Critique*. Aug-Sept. 1985, n°459-60, 860-77.
Das, Trisha. *The Art of the Television Interview*. New Delhi: Public Service Broadcasting Trust, 2007.
Davis, Aeron. *Promotional Cultures: The Rise and Spread of Advertising, Public Relations, Marketing and Branding*. Cambridge: Polity, 2013.
---. *Promotional Cultures*. Malden: Polity Press, 2013.
De Closets, Sophie. *Quand la télévision aimait les écrivains. Lectures pour tous 1953-1968.* Paris: De Boeck & Larcier, INA, 2004.
De Font-Réaulx, Dominique. *Painting and Photography 1839-1914*. Paris: Flammarion, 2012.
Debray, Régis. *L'Oeil naïf*. Paris: Seuil, 1994.

Delanoë, Jacques. *Les Pionniers de la photographie.* Rennes: Terres de brume éditions, 1996.
Deleuze, Gilles, & Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis: U of Minneapolis P, 1988.
Debord, Guy. *La Société du spectacle*. Paris: Gallimard, 1992.
Diaz, José-Luis. *L'Ecrivain imaginaire. Scénographies auctoriales à l'époque romantique*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007.
---. *Devenir Balzac. L'Invention de l'écrivain par lui-même*. Saint-Cyr-sur-Loire: Christian Pirot, 2007.
Dozo Björn-Olav, Anthony Glinoer, & Michel Lacroix, eds. *Imaginaires de la vie littéraire*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012.
Dupont, Jacques. *Colette*. Paris: Hachette supérieur, 1995.
---. *Physique de Colette*. Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 2003.
Durand, Alain-Philippe. *Frédéric Beigbeder et ses doubles*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008.
During, Simon, ed. *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1993.
Dyer, Richard. *Stars*. London: BFI Publishing, 1998.
---. *Heavenly Bodies*. *Film Stars and Society*. London: Routledge, 2004.
Emerling, Jae. *Photography. History and Theory*. London: Routledge, 2012.
Emery, Elizabeth. *Photojournalism and the Origins of the French Writer House Museum (1881-1914): Privacy, Publicity, and Personality*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012.
Etienne Carjat, Paris: Musée Carnavalet, 1982.
Evans, Margery A. *Baudelaire and Intertextuality*. *Poetry at the Crossroads*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993.
Favardin, Patrick, & Laurent, Bouëxière. *Le Dandysme*. Lyon: La Manufacture, 1988.
Ferrari, Federico, & Jean-Luc Nancy. *Iconographie de l'auteur*. Paris: Galilée, 2005.
Fiske, John. *Understanding Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1987.
Flieger, Jerry Aline. *Colette and the Fantom Subject of Autobiography*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992.
Foucault, Michel, *Dits et Écrits*. 2 vols. Paris: Gallimard, 1994.
Francis, Claude, & Ferdinand Gontier. *Colette*. Paris : Perrin, 1997.
---. *Creating Colette*. 2 vols. South Royalton, Vermont: Steerforth P, 1999.
Freund, Gisèle. *La Photographie en France au XIXème siècle.* Paris: Christian Bourgois éditeur, 2011.
Garval, Michael. *Cléo de Mérode and the Rise of Modern Celebrity Culture*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2012.
---. "Cléo de Mérode on Broadway: A fin-de-siècle French celebrity's "successful failure" in America", *Contemporary French Civilization*, January 2012, vol. 37, issue 1, 79-101.
Gary, Romain. *Lady L.* Paris: Gallimard, 1963.
---. *Pour Sganarelle*. Paris: Gallimard, 1965.
---. *Les Racines du ciel*. Paris: Gallimard, 1967.
---. *La Nuit sera calme*. Paris: Gallimard, 1974.
---. *Au-delà de cette limite votre ticket n'est plus valable*. Paris: Gallimard, 1975.

---. *Les Clowns lyriques*. Paris: Gallimard, 1979.
---. *L'Angoisse du Roi Salomon*. Paris: Gallimard, 1979.
---. *L'Homme à la colombe*. Paris: Gallimard, 1984.
---. *Le Sens de ma vie*. Paris: Gallimard, 2014.
Gaudreault, André, Catherine Russell, & Pierre Véronneau. *Le Cinématographe, nouvelle technologie du XXe siècle*. Lausanne: Payot, 2004.
Gauthier, Guy. *Le Documentaire, un autre cinéma*. Paris: Nathan, 1995.
Gillain, Nathalie. « Photographie et écriture de soi (1ère partie) », *Enjeux. Revue de formation continuée et de didactique du français*, vol.80, spring 2011, 61-126.
Genette, Gérard. *Seuils*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1987.
Gosling, Nigel. *Nadar*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1976.
Goulemot, Jean M., & Daniel Oster. *Gens de lettres, écrivains et bohèmes. L'imaginaire littéraire 1630-1900.* Paris: Minerve, 1992.
Graeves, Roger. *Nadar*. Paris: Flammarion, 1980.
Gray, Jonathan, & Amanda Lotz. *Television Studies*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012.
Grøtta, Marit. *Baudelaire's Media Aesthetics. The Gaze of the Flâneur in Nineteenth-Century Media*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.
Guellec, Laurence, & Françoise Hache-Bissette, eds. *Littérature et publicité de Balzac à Beigbeder. Actes du colloque des Arts décoratifs, 28-30 avril 2011*. Paris: Editions Gaussen, 2012.
---. *Littérature et publicité de Balzac à Beigbeder*. Marseille: Gaussen, 2012.
Gustafson, Donna. *Striking Resemblance: The Changing Art of Portraiture*. New Brunswick: Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers U, 2014.
Hamon, Philippe. « Images à lire et images à voir : 'images américaines' et crise de l'image au XIXè siècle (1850-1880) », Usages de l'image au XIXè siècle, Stéphane Michaud, Jean-Yves Mollier, & Nicole Savy, eds., Paris : Créaphis, 1992, 235-47.
---. *Imageries: Littérature et image au XIXe siècle*. Paris: José Corti, 2001.
Hangouët, Jean-François. *Romain Gary à la traversée des frontières*. Paris: Découvertes Gallimard, 2007.
---. *Romain Gary*. Paris: Cahiers de l'Herne, Editions de l'Herne, 2005.
Hanoosh, Michele. *Baudelaire and Caricature*. *From the Comic to an Art of Modernity*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1992.
Héron, Pierre-Marie, ed. *Ecrivains au micro*. *Les entretiens-feuilletons à la radio française dans les années cinquante*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010.
Hesmondhalgh, David. *Cultural Industries*. London: SAGE publications, 2013.
---. *Cultural Industries*. London: SAGE, 2013.
Hilmes, Michele. *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting 1922-1952*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997.
Hilmes, Michele, & Jason Jacobs, eds. *The Television History Book*. London: BFI, 2003.
Hilmes, Michele, & Jason Loviglio, eds. *Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Houssa, Nicole. *Le Souci de l'expression chez Colette*. Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1958.
---. *Le Souci de l'expression chez Colette*. Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1958.
Houston, Nancy. *Tombeau de Romain Gary*. Arles: Actes Sud, 1995.
Hubier, Sébastien. *Littératures intimes : les expressions du moi, de l'autobiographie à l'autofiction*. Paris: Armand Colin, 2003.
Huffer, Lynne. *Another Colette. The Question of Gendered Writing*. Ann Arbor: The U of Michigan P, 1995.
Hugo, Victor. *Notre Dame de Paris*. Paris: Garnier, 1961.
Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
Identités. De Disdéri au photomaton. Paris: Centre National de la Photographie, 1985.
Icart, Roger. *La Révolution du parlant vue par la presse française*. Perpignan: Institut Jean Vigo, 1988.
Iosifidis, Petros, Jeanette Steamers, & Mark Wheeler. *European Television Industries*. London: BFI Publishing, 2005.
Jeandillou, Jean-François. *Esthétique de la mystification. Tactique et stratégie littéraires*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1994.
---. *Supercheries littéraires. La vie et l'œuvre des auteurs supposés.* Geneva : Droz. 2001.
Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers. Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
---. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide.* New York: New York UP, 2008.
Kawakami, Akane. *Photobiography: Photobiographic Self-Writing in Proust, Guibert, Ernaux and Macé*. London: Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing, 2013.
Kristeva, Julia. *Colette, un génie au féminin*. La Tour d'Aigue: Editions de l'Aube, 2007.
L'ABCdaire de Colette. Paris: Flammarion, 2000.
Ladimer, Bethany. *Colette, Beauvoir and Duras. Age and Women Writers*. Gainesville: U of Florida, 1999.
Lafon, Michel, & Benoît Peeters. *Nous est un autre*. Paris: Flammarion, 2006.
Lagny, Michèle. *De l'histoire du cinéma. Méthode historique et histoire du cinéma*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1992.
Lane, Philippe. *La Périphérie du texte*. Paris: Nathan, 1992.
L'Année Baudelaire, vol.3, « Baudelaire et quelques artistes : affinités et résistances ». Paris : Klincksieck, 1997.
---. vol.7, « Baudelaire, du dandysme à la caricature ». Paris : Klincksieck, 2003.
Laugaa, Maurice. *La Pensée du pseudonyme*. Paris: PUF, 1986.
Leakey, F.W. *Baudelaire and Nature*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1969.
Lemaire, Michel. *Le dandysme de Baudelaire à Mallarmé*. Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1978.
Le Pichon, Yann, & Claude Pichois. *Le Musée retrouvé de Charles Baudelaire*. Paris: Stock, 1992.
Leprohon, Pierre. *Histoire du cinéma*. 2 vols. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1961.

Lévy, Marie-Françoise, ed. *La Télévision dans la République. Les années 50.* Paris: Editions Complexe, 1999.
Louette, Jean-François, & Roger Roche. *Portraits de l'écrivain contemporain*. Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2003.
Luneau, Marie-Pier, and Josée Vincent, eds. *La Fabrication de l'auteur*. Quebec: Editions Nota Bene, 2010.
Madélénat, Daniel. « Moi, biographe, m'as-tu vu ? », *Revue de Littérature comparée*, Paris: Klincksieck, 2008, 95-108.
Malraux, André. *Le Musée imaginaire*. Paris: Gallimard, 1996.
Marie, Michel. *Le Cinéma muet*. Paris: Cahiers du cinema/Scéren-CNDP, 2005.
Marien, Mary Warner. *Photography and Its Critics. A Cultural History, 1839-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.
McCauley, Elizabeth Anne. *A.A.E. Disdéri and the Carte de Visite Portrait Photograph*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1985.
McPherson, Heather. *Fin-de-siècle Faces: Portraiture in the Age of Proust*. Birmingham: U of Alabama at Birmingham, 1988.
---. *The Modern Portrait in Nineteenth-Century France*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001.
Meehan, Sean Ross. *Mediating American Autobiography: Photography in Emerson, Thoreau, Douglass and Whitman*. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 2008.
Meizoz, Jérôme. *Postures littéraires. Mise en scène moderne de l'auteur*. Geneva: Slatkine, 2007.
---. *La Fabrique des singularités. Postures littéraires II*. Geneva: Slatkine Erudition, 2011.
Melot, Michel. *L'Illustration: Histoire d'un art*. Geneva: Skira, 1984.
Meltzer, Françoise. *Seeing Double*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2011.
Meyer, Catherine, & Bertrand Meyer. *Nadar. Photographe, caricaturiste, journaliste*. Paris: Encre éditions, 1979.
Miquel, Pierre. *Histoire de la radio et de la télévision*. Paris: Editions Richelieu, 1972.
Mittel, Jason. *Genre and Television: From Cops Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
Moran, Joe. *Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America*. London: Pluto P, 2000.
Morin, Edgar. *Les Stars.* Paris: Seuil, 1972.
Mulgan, Geoff, ed. *The Question of Quality.* London: BFI Publishing, 1990.
Nadar. Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1965.
Nadar [Gaspard Félix Tournachon]. *Quand j'étais photographe*. New York: Arno Press, 1979.
---. *Charles Baudelaire intime: le poète vierge*. Paris: Ides et Callendes, 1994.
Niney, François. *Le Documentaire et ses faux-semblants*. Paris: Klincksieck, 2009.
Nora, Pierre. *Les Lieux de mémoire*, Paris: Gallimard, 1984.
Novak, Daniel A. *Realism, Photography, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008.
Ophuls, Max. *Souvenirs*. Paris : Petite bibliothèque des Cahiers du Cinéma, 2002.

Ortel, Philippe. *La Littérature à l'ère de la photographie. Enquête sur une révolution invisible*. Nîmes: Editions Jacqueline Chambon, 2002.
Pawlovitch, Paul. *L'Homme que l'on croyait*. Paris: Fayard, 1981.
Pépin, Jean-François. *Aspects du corps dans l'oeuvre de Romain Gary*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003.
Pérez, Christophe. *Romain Gary. La Comédie de l'absolu.* Bordeaux: Eurédit, 2009.
Peroni, Michel. *De l'Ecrit à l'écran*. Paris: Bibliothèque publique d'information, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1991.
Pichois, Claude. *Charles Baudelaire.* Paris: Julliard, 1987.
Pichois, Claude, & Jean-Paul Avice. *Baudelaire*. Paris : Editions Paris Musées, 1993.
---. *Baudelaire : l'ivresse des images*. Paris : Textuel, 2003.
---. *Les Dessins de Baudelaire*. Paris: Textuel, 2003.
Pichois, Claude, & Alain Brunet. *Colette*. Paris: Editions de Fallois, 1999.
Pichois, Claude, & François Ruchon. *Iconographie de Charles Baudelaire*. Geneva: Pierre Cailler éditeur, 1960.
Piret, Pierre, ed. *La Littérature à l'ère de la reproductibilité technique. Réponses littéraires aux nouveaux dispositifs représentatifs créés par les médias modernes*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007.
Portes-Dugast, Francine. *Colette. Les Pouvoirs de l'écriture*. Rennes : Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1999.
Potonniée, Georges. *Histoire de la découverte de la photographie et Daguerre, peintre et décorateur*. Paris : Editions Jean-Michel Place, 1989.
Prédal, René, ed. "Le documentaire français", *CinémAction.* Paris: Editions du Cerf – Télérama : Centre National du Cinéma, 1987.
Rambach, Marine. *Colette pure et impure : Bataille pour la postérité d'un écrivain*. Paris: Editions gaies et lesbiennes, 2004.
Resch, Yannick. *Corps féminin, corps textuel*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1973.
Sacotte, Mireille, ed. *Romain Gary, Emile Ajar. Légendes du je.* Paris: Quarto Gallimard, 2009.
[includes: *Education européenne*, *La Promesse de l'aube*, *Chien Blanc, Les Trésors de la Mer Rouge, Les Enchanteurs*, *La Vie devant soi, Pseudo*, *Vie et mort d'Emile Ajar*]
Sadoul, Georges. *Histoire générale du cinéma*. 6 vol. Paris: Denoel, 1975.
Sagne, Jean. *L'Atelier du photographe 1840-1940*. Paris: Presses de la Renaissance, 1984.
Sandler, Martin W. *Photography: An Illustrated History*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002.
Schoolcraft, Ralph. *Romain Gary. The Man who Sold his Shadow*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.
Smith, Terry E. *The Architecture of Aftermath*. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 2006.
Sontag, Susan. *Sur la photographie*. Paris: Seuil, 1983.
Soussloff, Catherine. *The Subject in Art: Portraiture and the Birth of the Modern*. Durham: Duke UP, 2006.

Spigel, Lynn. *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in postwar America.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992.
Starobinski, Jean. *Portrait de l'artiste en saltimbanque.* Geneva : Skira, 1970.
Steiner, Uwe. *Walter Benjamin. An Introduction to His Work and Thought*. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 2010.
Thélot, Jérôme. *Les Inventions littéraires de la photographie*. Paris: PUF, 2003.
Ther, Céline. *Gary enchante Ajar*. Arles: Editions L'art-Dit, 2013.
Thompson, John B. *Merchants of Culture. The Publishing Business in the 21st Century*. New York: Plume, 2012.
Timberg, Bernard. *Television Talk: A History of the TV Talk Show*. Austin: U of Texas P, 2002.
Trachtenberg, Alan. *Classic Essays on Photography*. New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980.
Troyat, Henri. *Baudelaire*. Paris: Flammarion, 1994.
Tudoret, Patrick. *L'Ecrivain sacrifié. Vie et mort de l'émission littéraire.* Paris: Editions Le bord de l'eau/INA, 2009.
Verlaine, Paul. *Charles Baudelaire*. La Rochelle: Rumeur des Ages, 1993.
Viala, Alain. *Naissance de l'écrivain*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1985.
Virmaux, Alain & Odette. *Colette et le cinéma*. Paris: Fayard, 2004.
Vrla, Amélie. *Romain Gary, Emile Ajar: Regards croisés*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013.
Ward, Patricia, ed. *Baudelaire and the Poetics of Modernity*. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 2001.
Watson, Janell. *Literature and Material Culture from Balzac to Proust*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999.
Werge, John. *The Evolution of Photography*. London: Piper and Carter, 1890.
West, Shearer. *Portraiture*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004.
Whidden, Seth. *Authority in Crisis in French Literature, 1850-1880*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2014.
White, Hayden. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973.
Williams, Susan S. *Confounding Images: Photography and Portraiture in Antebellum American Fiction*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1997.
Yacavone, Kathrin. *Benjamin, Barthes and the Singularity of Photography*. New York: Continuum Publishing Group, 2012.
Zufferey, Joël. *L'Autofiction: Variations génériques et discursives*. Louvain-la-Neuve: L'Harmattan, 2012.
Zurbrugg, Nicholas, ed. *Jean Baudrillard, Art and Artefact*. London: SAGE Publications, 1997.

Web sources

Actualité littéraire. ORTF 1st channel. 6 Mar. 1969. *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel*. Web. 14 June 2016.

Actualité littéraire. ORTF 1st channel. 19 June 1969. *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel*. Web. 14 June 2016.
"Colette a 80 ans." *Actualités françaises*. 29 Jan. 1953. *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel*. Web. 2 Dec. 2016.
"Colette est morte. Rétrospective." *Journal télévisé de 20h*. RTF. 4 Aug. 1954. *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel*. Web. 2 Dec. 2016.
Compagnon, Antoine. "Théorie de la littérature : qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?" *Fabula* (n.d.): 1-54. Web. 10 Sept. 2016.
Dupuis, Jérôme. " Photographie inédite : un air de Baudelaire." *L'Express*. 20 Nov. 2013. Web. 16 Aug. 2015.
" Frédéric Beigbeder rencontre ses fans." *Ouest France*. 20 May 2016. 26 Feb.2017.
Gallinari, Melliandro Mendes. "La « clause auteur » : l'écrivain, l'*ethos* et le discours littéraire." *Argumentation et Analyse du Discours* 3 (2009): 1-16. Web. 10 Sept. 2016.
Holtorf, Cornelius. "Sites of Memory." *Archive-It-University of Toronto*. 5 May 2002. Web. 20 Feb.2017.
Italiques. ORTF 2nd channel. 27 Apr. 1972. *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel*. Web. 18 June 2016.
Italiques. ORTF 2nd channel. 15 June 1973. *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel*. Web. 18 June 2016.
Italiques. ORTF 2nd channel. 9 Nov. 1973. *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel*. Web. 20 June 2016.
Italiques. ORTF 2nd channel. 20 Sept. 1974. *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel*. Web. 20 June 2016.
Lectures pour tous. RTF. 10 Oct. 1956. *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel*. Web. 12 June 2016.
Lectures pour tous. RTF. 19 Dec. 1956. *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel*. Web. 12 June 2016.
Lectures pour tous. RTF. 4 May. 1960. *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel*. Web. 12 June 2016.
Lectures pour tous. RTF. 30 May. 1962. *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel*. Web. 13 June 2016.
Lectures pour tous. RTF. 17 Apr. 1963. *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel*. Web. 13 June 2016.
Lectures pour tous. ORTF 1st channel. 2 Nov. 1966. *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel*. Web. 13 June 2016.
"Les écrivains et leur mère." *En toutes lettres*. ORTF 1st channel. 6 Aug. 1970. *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel*. Web. 16 June 2016.
Mullan, John. "When it is Acceptable to Judge a Book by its Cover." *The Guardian*. 18 Oct. 2003. Web. 11 July 2016.
Rittman, Alex. "Berlin: Keira Knightley-Starring Biopic 'Colette' Sells Wide." *The Hollywood Reporter*. 17 Feb. 2016. Web. 25 Nov. 2016.

"Romain Gary et Emile Ajar." *Apostrophes*. Antenne 2. 3 July 1981. *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel*. Web. 25 June 2016.
Smith, Daniel, and John Protevi. "Gilles Deleuze." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Winter 2015 edition. Web. 2 Sept. 2015.
Tetteh, Sarah. "Another Period Drama for Keira! Actress Knightley in Talks to Star in Biopic about Iconic French Novelist Colette." *The Daily Mail*. 1 Feb. 2016. Web. 3 Feb. 2016.

Filmography

99F. Dir. Jan Kounen. Based on a story by Frédéric Beigbeder. Pathé, 2007.
Colette. Dir. Yannick Bellon. Doriane Films, 1951.
Divine. Dir. Max Ophuls. Screenplay and dialogues by Colette. Based on a story by Colette. Eden Productions, 1935.
Gigi. Dir. Vincente Minnelli. Screenplay by Alan Jay Lerner. Based on a story by Colette. MGM, 1958.
Le Blé en herbe. Dir. Claude Autant-Lara. Screenplay by Claude Autant-Lara, Jean Aurench & Pierre Bost. Based on a story by Colette. Gaumont, 1954.
Le Lac aux dames. Dir. Marc Allégret. Dialogues by Colette. Sopra, 1934.
Lumière ! L'aventure commence. Dir. Thierry Frémaux. Ad Vitam. 2017.
Mitsou. Dir. Jacqueline Audry. Screenplay by Pierre Laroche. Based on a story by Colette. Ardennes Films, 1956.
White Dog. Dir. Samuel Fuller. Screenplay by Samuel Fuller & Curtis Hanson. Based on a story by Romain Gary. Paramount Pictures, 1982.
Yannick Bellon, souvenirs d'un tournage. Dir. Yannick Bellon. Doriane Films, 2012.